

UNIVERSITA' CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE
MILANO

Dottorato di ricerca in Istituzioni e Politiche
ciclo XXX

S.S.D: SPS/14 * M-STO/04

LOST IN PEACE. RISE AND DECLINE OF LABOR
PARTY IN THE FRAMEWORK OF ISRAELI
POLITICAL HISTORY (1948-2001)

Tesi di Dottorato di : ANNA MARIA BAGAINI

Matricola: 441873

Anno Accademico 2016 / 2017



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INTRODUCTION

Premises for the analysis

Analyzing the Middle Eastern context, it seems clear that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the most serious issues effecting the instability of the region. In order to better understand the impasse that characterizes the peace process between these actors, I think it is necessary to comprehend the nature of the subjects involved in Israeli political life. It should be clear that this thesis does not deal with the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict *per se*, but it is focused instead on the domestic Israeli politics. Events connected with that conflict and with the Peace Process are analyzed only through the lens of the domestic debate.

The dynamics of Israeli politics seem easy to understand. We have clear in mind the events (internal and external) that had heavily influenced the course of Israeli history and their political consequences, such as: the Six Days War of 1967, the *Likud* victory in 1977, the Peace process started during the first half of the 1990s and the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, with the consequent failure of Oslo Agreements. But, even if what we have just mentioned is obvious, it is not enough to fully realize the cultural and socio-political transformation of the country.

Indeed, Israeli society is young, fluid, dynamic and characterized by a democratic system, subjected to numerous stresses and considerable strains. Among these elements, there is not only a precarious security context, but also the social and cultural challenge posed by various waves of immigration, that have been continuous since the early years of the State until today. During its sixty-eight years of life, the young state has accelerated major changes: the demographic and social transformations of the Israeli reality have undermined the image of the secular, western and socialist Israel as designed by the founding fathers. These changes of the main social structure have provoked a great ideological shift, that is clearly evident in the results of the elections of the last sixteen years.

What has come out is a long-lasting dominance of the *Likud* and of the right-wing front in general. So, this complex framework demands a more nuanced understanding of the social stratification which is crossed by “cross-cutting lines”, dividing the population along ethnic, religious, social and economic status as well as ideological, cultural and religious outlooks.

If we look at the election results of the 2003, 2006, 2013 and 2015 elections¹, we can see that *Ha'Avoda*'s defeat can't be always confirmed as a direct result of a brilliant performance carried out

¹ In 2003 *Likud* scored an overwhelming victory (38 MKs) against Labor, who performed poorly (18 MKs); also in 2015 and 2013 Netanyahu's party was the biggest in the *Knesset* with respectively 30 and 31 MKs (while

by the right-wing parties (as in the case of 2006, in which it emerges as a winning party, Kadima, center training²) or, even in the cases when a *Likud*-led government was formed, it wasn't always due to an overwhelming victory of the rightist coalition (we can observe what happened in 2009³). Underlying these dynamics, this thesis wants to be an attempt to propose an original point of view of these phenomena, trying to explain the current Labor decline, not only taking into account demographic dynamics (and therefore attributable to the electoral results, strictly assessable by a point of numerical view), but considering these outcomes the product of a deeper process of cultural and political transformation of Israel, made finally evident through the electoral expression.

Simultaneously, the Labor Party entered into a long-lasting crisis: the "land for peace" principle was crumbling down, giving to Israelis prove that it simply couldn't work and leaving them with a spread sense of mistrust; moreover, with the time passing by, Labor élite had not simply been able to fill the vacuum of leadership left behind by Rabin, even if Ehud Barak was able to conquer Israeli voters in 1999. We have chosen to start our research from 1948 because is the year of the establishment of the State and also the beginning of the Israeli political experience as the natural continuation of the Zionist one in the Mandate period; while the temporal limit of this research has been established in 2001, when the electoral results declared *Likud*'s victory, headed by Ariel Sharon. Those elections were a turning-point because since that moment the Labor Party hasn't been able to win any following rounds of voting until today.

So, my proposal is to analyze the lacking electoral victories of the Labor Party (*Miflet Ha'Avoda*) from the second term of Rabin's premiership (1992-1995), until 2001 (the year when Ariel Sharon brought back *Likud* to power, inaugurating a long-lasting dominance). These failures will be studied in the light of the events that followed Rabin's assassination, with the consequent collapse of the Oslo Process and with a special focus on the elements that favored the political shift taking place in Israeli society, facilitating the hegemony of right-wing coalitions in the *Knesset*, to the detriment of the Labor Party.

One of the hypothesis, that this project has the aim to verify, is that the collapse of the Oslo Agreements, signed by Yitzhak Rabin, is strictly connected not only with the significant increase of violence in Israeli political environment of those days (due to the harsh opposition began against the

Ha'Avoda just 24 and 15). Data are taken from The Israeli Democracy Institute, *Elections*, (<https://en.idi.org.il/israeli-elections-and-parties/elections/>).

² *Kadima* won obtained 29 seats, *Ha'Avoda* 19 and *Likud* 12. Data from The Israeli Democracy Institute, *Elections*, (<https://en.idi.org.il/israeli-elections-and-parties/elections/2006/>).

³ *Kadima* and *Likud* won respectively 28 and 27 MKs, but the leader which had more chance to form a government was Netanyahu instead of Tzipi Livni, so *Likud* was leading the *Knesset* for technical reason and not for a numerical advantage. Data from The Israeli Democracy Institute, *Elections*, (<https://en.idi.org.il/israeli-elections-and-parties/elections/2009/>).

work of Rabin within the frame of the peace process) and with the consequent extreme polarization of Israeli electorate, but also with the decline of the *Miflet Ha'Avoda*. Those years were crucial for a cultural transformation, leading Israeli politics to a very thorny phase in the history of the State of Israel itself. Through a wider perspective of Israeli political history, we would like to provide an interesting and functional background, in order to be able to underline how Israeli political tendencies changed with the advent and the collapse of the Oslo Process.

Methodology

The processes outlined above are very different from one another and belong to different areas of study. Analyzing the political transformation of a country means to take into account different elements, such as: history, demography, ideological perspective, political change, institutional development, social and cultural transformations. This is the reason why it is necessary to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to conduct this type of analysis.

According to this method, we have identified a set of tools that permit to point out some key-factors, resulting from different dynamics which are unidentifiable at first glance. Shown below are these instruments, grouped according to the several disciplines involved in the course of the research.

Historical dimension

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Part of the groundwork will be focused on historical research in order to collect the necessary documents to give solidity to the analysis. The goal was to collect information about thorny historical events for Israeli politics for using them as a starting point for further analysis; the historical perspective is a considerable element because it is the parameter which guides the development of this study but notwithstanding this important role, it has to be considered as a preparatory tool for the development of further analysis which go beyond the historical dimension. At the same time, there was the attempt to create, to follow and to provide an alternative chronology of events, which is coherent with the traditional one, but which is more focused on circumstances involving Israeli socio-political arena.

In this perspective is paramount to explain that the foreign policy events (regarding the relationships with other states) that are significant for this work are considered just in a measure that allow a deeper comprehension of the dynamics of Israeli politics, because the purpose here is not to satisfy the historical analysis, rather to recreate the context which influenced the internal context. The purpose that determines this criterion means also that, for the same reasons, the lens used in order to read such historical events are not neutral, but they belong to a specific national narrative: the Israeli one. This attitude has been chosen not with the intention of denying or ignoring the Arab (Egyptian, Jordanian, Palestinian or Syrian) perception, rather because the aim is not to

examine in depth the numerous Arab-Israeli wars, neither the conflict (or the Peace Process) with the Palestinians.

Important documents have been founded by several Israeli institutions, such as: the Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, the Central Zionist Archives, the National Library and the Israel State Archives; but, since the considered historical period is recent, many archives and documents are not yet available because still protected by state secrecy. Moreover, as you can notice only Israeli institutions were consulted in order to reinforce the internal perspective.

Research on the field and available literature

For this reason, it has been fundamental to integrate and enrich the historical sources with fieldwork material collected in Israel, with a review of the present state of the art and with a careful reading of the available literature. These different types of sources, analyzed in a comparative and integrated way, will be particularly important to outline the historical and political perspective of Israel.

Spending almost a year researching on the field, allowed to enhance familiarity with Israeli culture, first of all by learning Hebrew, which allowed to comprehend better not only documents, but also newspapers, radio and television programs, sayings and popular songs, all elements which gave the opportunity to catch the cultural-political developments of the country. This aspect of the research gave also an advantage in the scrutiny of the current literature, which is used in this analysis with great attention for the ideological shades belonging to the different authors and scholars; this is true, especially for what concerns the relations between Israel and the Arab world and, in particular, the Palestinians. Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim and Llan Pappé (to name a few) are important members of this genre (the “new historians”), which harshly criticizes the approaches adopted by Israel and which created an intense debate on the topic (involving the identity issue of the state itself) with other Israeli scholars like, for example Baruch Kimmerling.

For this reason, an attempt to carefully overlap the myriad of texts has been made in order to try to make the complexity of the Israeli case (analyzed in the light of different disciplines) more understandable. The choice of taking into account some works of the main academic currents and not to focus on some other important interpretations (which have contributed to develop the intellectual and critical debate in Israel), was taken in order to consider the transformation of Israeli culture as it is today and not with the aim of giving less importance to After having created connections between the various fields of studies (mainly political history, electoral studies, demography and sociology), it has been possible to create a unify structure, a starting point for causes of reflection which can concretely have an incidence on the understanding of Israeli political dynamics.

Much of the literature reflects on the evolution of Israeli society, analyzing it from a historical point of view and explaining it through ideological and cultural parameters that characterize the vision of Zionist leadership. The works in which I come across dedicate a lot of attention to explaining the difficulty encountered (and perhaps even today) in trying to harmonize people who, despite belonging to a single people, the Jewish people, are distinguished by cultural traditions very different. Authors like S.N. Eisenstadt, Vittorio Dan Segre and Anita Shapira have largely explored Israeli society, pointing out how it has profoundly changed and how far it has departed from the original vision of the founding fathers. This topic is largely dealt with because Israel still has to handle a heated public debate on its own identity definition, trying to measure the Jewish and the democratic character. In terms of democracy, there are many books that aim to explain the Israeli political system, considered by many democrats, albeit imperfect.

Sources such as books, articles, but also interesting testimonies offered by alternative types of documents, such as pictures, documentaries, videos, maps and expositions (for example the Israel Museum's one, inside the Yitzhak Rabin Center in Tel Aviv) gave a precious contribution because they covered a wide spectrum of issues and topics, filling the gap left by the traditional literature, which sometimes lacked of correspondence with the very core of this research project.

Electoral studies and data analysis

The last type of tool belongs to the field of social statistics. In our analysis perspective, quantitative data will be important as we will consider demographic and electoral trends. The analysis of the electoral turnouts (especially in 1992, 1996 and 1999) are fundamental in order to figure out whether there are any recurring variables that determine voters' orientation, influencing the historical and political evolution of the country. A careful use of these quantitative sources will be useful just in order to strengthen the structure of this work and for this reason, the data we are talking about will be selected from a narrow range of specialized databases, such as: Israeli institutes involved in socio-political research (Israel Democracy Institute) and national authorities (Central Bureau of Statistics and *Knesset* Research and Information Centre).

Many of the quantitative data used in this project come also from specialized and qualified researches already showed in other books and articles, see for example the works of Arian Asher, Moshe Lissak, Daniel Horowitz and many others. These scholars sought to make the mechanisms of Israeli voting behaviors more intelligible, which have peculiarities that are difficult to observe by external observers. These publications provide interesting scrutiny of the outcomes of those elections considered "critical" for country's life, such as 1977 and 1992.

This type of analysis does not miss the chance to underline how ethnic belonging is still a profound cross-cutting lines in Israeli society; not only with regard to the great division between Arabs and Jews (Sammy Smootha introduced the concept of "ethnic democracy"), but also regarding the myriad

facets inside Jewish ethnicity. Sergio Della Pergola is one of the most authoritative writers on Israeli demography studies, a discipline that has become increasingly important over the years in influencing the country's political choices, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel is an emblematic case where the perception of reality determines decisively the choice between different political positions: this kind of perception is about the way a person evaluates the surrounding reality, starting from his identity and his political culture. This last feature, when considered at a national level, comes out as the result of a socio-political, multi-faceted and complex reality, which could be better understood thanks to the tools mentioned above. The analysis of the dimension of the political culture is not important irrespectively of the research, but it is functional to understand how the disconnection between Israeli society and the values proposed by the Labor Party started and intensified with the collapse of the Oslo Process, decreeing a long-lasting decline that affects the party until today.

Research Topics

For the reason mentioned above, the chapters are going to be organized following different levels of analysis. The first chapter, “Political history of Israel: some premises”, is designed in order to show the dynamics which gave birth to Zionism, along with an overview if the main currents which belong to this ideology. These premises, indeed, are very important to our research because they allow a more complete understanding of the first years of the Jewish presence in Palestine and how, in that period, the political culture of the future State of Israel took shape. As a matter of fact, precisely in the years of the British Mandate in Palestine, Labor Zionism affirmed and gained its hegemony, through cultural and institutional initiatives.

The second section of this dissertation, “Ideological and political apogee of *Mapai* (1948-1973)”, goes on clarifying the Israeli context in a historical-political perspective and outlying how the ideological and political assumptions of the founding fathers allowed Ben-Gurion and *Mapai*, the expression of Labor Zionism, not only to consolidate the fragile state of Israel but also to dominate the domestic political landscape. The traumatic events of the Six Days War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973) gave birth to new territorial and political landscape, which changed deeply Israeli society and its ideological attitudes, indeed these wars contributed to weakening that set of interiorized values and symbols, belonging to Israeli civil religion, represented and spread by *Mapai*.

The following chapter, “The rise of the Right and *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* 's loss of dominance (1973-1981)”, tries to delineate how, as consequences of the previously mentioned events, the Labor Party started its electoral decline, losing also its cultural hegemony until 1977, when *Likud* won the elections for the first time ever. What is important for this analysis is to understand the changes that have taken place inside Israeli society, paying particular attention to the effect of the main ethnic groups (*Ashkenazim* and *Mizrachim*); analysis of demography and its influence on orientations politics and

culture of society are central. It is fundamental to trace those dynamics that made possible a change of the electoral orientation of the Israelis; the 1977 elections were a political earthquake because they are the starting point of a new epoch (some scholars call it the “Second Republic”) in the history of the country.

“The years of transition: from a dominant *Likud* to a challenging Labor (1981-1991)” is the fourth chapter, whose aim is to introduce the Eighties as a very important period of transition, which prepared the Israeli society and its attitudes for the major events of the 1990s. Begin is confirmed in the role of Prime Minister for the second time in the 1981 elections, considered the ballot which has been most strongly determined by the ethnic element in Israel history. The decade, which opened with the first Lebanon war, represented also a political stalemate, indeed *Mapai* and *Likud* formed together governments of national unity both after 1984 and 1988 electoral. If those years were characterized by the illusory tranquility of the internal political scenario, 1987 would upset this calm with the outbreak of the first Intifada, the Palestinian popular uprising, which will be an important moment for Israelis to become more aware and conscious about the un-sustainability of the existing status quo in the long term, starting to look for a political solution of the territorial contention with Palestinians. This event gave more importance to the “Palestinian dimension” of the Arab-Israeli conflict (also determined by the signing of the David Peace Camp peace treaty with the Egyptian ten years before); this passage had profoundly shaped the attitudes of a part of Israeli public opinion, which was one of the key-elements that would have led to the beginning of the peace process in 1991 and to the victory of Yitzhak Rabin in 1992.

The core of the analysis thus is developed through the fifth and the sixth chapters, entitled respectively “*Mifletet Ha’Avoda* and Rabin era (1991-1995)” and “History, elections and the Labor Party (1996-2001)”. It is precisely with the advent of the 1990s, along with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the outbreak of the Gulf War that international attempts to foster an agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors in the region converged with a favorable climate of openness ‘among Israeli electorate. The elections of 1992 were critical because they demonstrated this change of attitude assigning the victory, after fifteen years, to Yitzhak Rabin as the head of the Labor Party. The decision to define this period as the “Rabin era”, was taken despite he was prime minister for only three years, until his assassination in 1995; therefore, this emphasis is meant in order to highlight the importance of those years led by the Labor government, during which an agreement with Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), was signed for the first time in 1993. This event introduced a new, concrete horizon, considered unattainable until that very moment. What is extremely interesting for this analysis is verifying how profoundly and how radically the introduction of this new perspective has changed the political culture of Israeli society, which in those years would have to face the trauma of the Prime Minister’s assassination, the spread of extremist political language, the increase of terrorist violence and the decline of the Oslo process. The sixth and last chapter investigates more on the directions of these dynamics, starting from some

tendencies and variables which emerged as decisive for the outcome of 1992 elections, such as: the importance of leadership, the preponderance of issues as a decisive variable for political affiliation and voting orientation, the close correlation and interdependence between the pace of the peace process and Israeli internal politics. The following electoral rounds of 1996 and 1999 are read taking into account the electoral performances of the Labor Party, trying to explain also the causes of the long-lasting political decline which the Labor camp is still experiencing today, for the benefit of *Likud* and its national-religious allies.

After having showed the structure of this project, a brief outline of the analysis' core issues is presented below. This dissertation has "integrated" structure, in which thematic elements (explaining factors and issues relevant for the analysis) are shown and combined with an historical excursus of Israeli political life.

What guides political affiliation? Identity formation and borders perception

Functional to this research was trying to understand the elements that have influenced the election results in the period in question (1992-2001). Religion and ethnicity are two very important vectors for political affiliation in Israel, but specifically speaking about the period we are analyzing, another main factor contributed to electoral preferences formation: the concept of identity related to the perception of borders. The elections that took place during those years were, indeed, mainly driven by the issue variable of the peace process and the Territories.

Already during the pre-state period, different ideas about the territorial dimension and the identity of Israel, were one of the main points that had distinguished the Revisionist wing from the Labor one; but the depth of this division came out strongly, influencing Israeli politics as never it had done before, during the 1990's and the early 2000's.

Starting from these considerations, we will proceed to analyze Labor Party's statements about the territorial issue, looking at policies, proposals and attitudes regarding settlements and positions taken during the various attempts to reach an agreement with the Palestinian side. These peace process aspects are crucial to understand why and when the *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* has failed the opportunity to make real his "land for peace" vision and what were the weaknesses of this approach, that seems to be still unable to convince the majority of Israelis.

Many identities for one Israel

The territorial debate is probably the main field of public discussion, where the dispute among the different groups of Israeli society reaches its highest level of intensity. But there are other issues (such as the state and the religion, for example) that contribute to delineate the major rift-lines dividing the country on political issues of great importance. What comes out is the creation of strong

groups inside Israeli society, which are mainly and strongly characterized according to a specific political orientation, established along with religious, ethnic and identity elements.

The result of this high political polarization touches the issue "democracy" in a state that is not characterized by a monolithic society. So how the lively debate about political representation can be handled? What are the standards for establishing civil and political rights? Those questions, related to the topic of identity, are a spark for reflection on a difficult choice that the State of Israel will take in the coming years. This selection contains three elements: land, identity and democracy, the founding national triad. The most difficult aspect is that, the preliminary choice of a pair of these options, automatically excludes the third one.

The future of national identity, increasingly fragmented and heterogeneous, involves the very character of the state which, by definition, is to be Jewish and democratic. It would seem, however, that, in this particular historical moment, giving up one of these three elements of identity is too expensive for the society. This, in my opinion, is the reason why a person chooses to adhere to policies that emphasize the exceptional character of the nation which, though, continues to find itself isolated and in a instable security. Israel will have to decide how to approach these options in order to ensure his own survival, but this goal requires the sacrifice of one great political vision: the Greater Israel, the Jewish State or the Israeli democracy.

Party analysis: *Mifleget Ha'Avoda's* success and decline

9

Israeli society is divided by cross-cutting lines polarizing and lighting up the political debate, especially on several critical issues; two of them are central for this analysis: state identity definition and the approach towards the peace process.

Due to the dramatic change of the social composition, also the main political guidelines of Israeli voters changed and, with them, voters' preferences; for this reason, we need to analyze what happened to Israeli highlighting general political trends, correlated also with the response given by political parties. In particular, our attention will be paid to the changes concerning Israeli Labor Party we will observe the transformation of the proposed values, his political vision and his electoral programs.

The main questions about the domestic political scenario are clear: why the party has failed in the past 16 years? Instead, why *Likud* was able to win consensus? What role played the collapse of the Oslo Process and Rabin's assassination? The analysis will focus exclusively on the *Mifleget Ha'Avoda*, also taking into account those political and social processes that have provoked the loss of influence that *Ashkenazi* Labor component used to have. Other parties will be considered only when the comparison will be useful to the research.

Political history of the State of Israel

Analyzing the history and the transformation of Israeli political framework will be fundamental. For this reason, in the background of this investigation we will keep in mind the evolution of the Zionist movement in a historical-political perspective, in order to understand the value-related basis of contemporary parties. Moreover, is it also fundamental being aware of the ideological assumptions of the founding fathers and of the historical context that allowed *Mapai* (the party from which Labor originated) to maintain political and cultural hegemony in Israel until 1977. This theoretical framework is expected to help us understanding the cultural and political environment in which the events from 1992 until 2006 took place.

Moreover, the course of the Peace Process and the following failure of Oslo Agreements are two very important elements that will be taken into account, not as an independent topic of the research but as a functional tool to illustrate the correlation between those events and the political change in Israel. That is also the reason why part of the analysis will be dedicated to the role of Yitzhak Rabin, in order to highlight what he was able to offer to Israelis and what he achieved (or missed) with the Oslo Accords in 1993. This aspect is crucial for the research because it allows to be focused on political leadership and its importance in order to convince voters about the reliability of the candidate.

In conclusion, the reason why our research should investigate these topics is incident to the political and social framework of Israel, where peace and security remain key terms of the political debate and one of the major focus on public opinion.

Research hypothesis and conclusions

What we can suppose is that the political events of the 1990's and of the early 2000's had special implications on Israeli history and politics; indeed, what has emerged from those years is that the internal debate rests on the peace process (and vice versa), connecting the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation to different and contrasting visions of the state of Israel: the first one envisions it as a Jewish Nation, loyal to its ancestral homeland; the second one imagines a modern, secular state, at peace with its neighbors. This strong ideological clash has been reinforced by specific demographic tendencies that have been developed during these last twenty-six years. Indeed, the immigration from the Former Soviet Union and the high birth rate in the religious and nationalist sectors of the society seems to assure a future numerical advantage of right-wing parties. The result is a deeper polarization of the political arena, which has acquired a more rightist tendency, leaving the Labor camp in a deep impasse.

All true; but the last elections on March 2015, albeit assigning the task of leading the State to Benjamin Netanyahu, did not seem to confirm this overwhelming majority (in fact his coalition obtained just 2 more seats in the *Knesset*, 61 to 59, in comparison to the opposition's block). So, is it just a matter of numbers? Also, the results of 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2013 elections (even if not take

into consideration in this dissertation) instilled the same doubt regarding the predominance of the demographic factor and the un-reversibility of the voting trends that are taking place. Starting from those analysis, after a preliminary reading of materials, taking into account sources of different kind and considering the interesting research activities on the field, the following hypothesis have been formulated.

The quest for leadership

The Labor Party is no longer able to exert a strong attraction on voters for several reasons and not only because it is facing an increasingly “fragmented society”. Among these causes, this research will focus especially on the fact that, after Rabin's assassination, *Miflet Ha'Avoda* wasn't able to take advantage of his work, in order to maintain a significant role within the public debate about security, that is still today one of the strongest sources of political polarization. Moreover, after the 1992 elections, Israeli political competition has become more “presidential”, undertaking strong individualistic dispositions which are giving increasing importance to political personalities and leaders, rather than to party ideology or organization. Probably this step back was also due to the fact that no other candidate, proposed by Labor coalition, was trusted by Israelis as Rabin was; so, what came out has been an increasing and easy monopolization of the military and security discourse by the *Likud*.

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A prominence of the issues variable

Israeli politics is mainly and deeply based on a struggle between opposite visions of the State, which are represented by the two main political forces: Labor camp and the rightist wing led by *Likud*. The difference between these two coalitions is that; for the nationalist forces, those ideas are very important for the definition of party identity, while the leftist camp has lost this centrality, focusing more on welfare and social issues. It seems somehow, that this change in Labor's political attitude has been fundamental in boosting the ongoing loss of influence in the society of the *Ashkenazi* Labor component (already started in the 70's). These considerations, in addition to a preliminary study of Arian Asher's electoral analysis, suggest that considering the “issues variable” as the strongest element defining electoral choices in Israel, between 1992 and 2001, seems reasonable. In fact, this aspect would explain, in a certain measure, *Miflet Ha'Avoda* 's defeats at the ballots.

Oslo: the origin of a new decline

Lastly, we can consider the events taking place during the analyzed period (1992-2006) as fundamental for the development of this research. In fact, they are not only the framework in which took place Labor Party's loss of influence, but they are also factors that actively contributed to this process. What this project would like to highlight is how those historical and political occurrences created the favorable conditions for a radical change that invested Israeli society, influencing political trends and voters' preferences.

In particular, the hypothesis is that the collapse of the Oslo Process (started after Rabin's assassination) played a very special role in outlying the reasons of Labor camp's decline, leaving Israeli left unable to reaffirm his vision on the national political scene and to offer a trustworthy leadership.

In conclusion, while *Miflet Ha'Avoda* still losing at the ballots, the political arena seems to be dominated by a more nationalist way of conceiving the State and its relationships with its neighbors. For the Labor camp will be essential to regain part of the lost consensus in order to rebalance Israeli political discourse and to face the identity and political challenges to which Israel is called to confront with. This will be a critical step, not just to break the status quo in the Palestinian issue but, above all, to ensure an internal balance, that is fundamental in order to delineate a secure future for the country itself.

Chapter 1. POLITICAL HISTORY OF ISRAEL: PREMISES TO MAPAI'S ASCENDANCE

This dissertation starts with a chapter about the origins of Zionism and about the dynamics, developed in the pre-State period, that defined the fundamental characteristics of Israeli political arena. The parties competing today are bolstered by different vision of Zionism that first animated the founding fathers and the members of the Zionist movement

Particular attention is given to the role of Socialist Zionism as the main political actor who was able to build the cultural patterns which formed Israeli dominant ethos and civil religion, assuring to Ben-Gurion and to *Mapai* political dominance during the first decades of Israel history.

For the reasons mentioned above, the following paragraphs don't want to provide an anthology or a complete examination of all the Zionist authors and currents. The leaders and the interpretations were selected and analyzed because were considered functional and useful in order to obtain a general framework, able to explain the premises relevant for a better understanding of Israel political history.

Moreover, between the lines of historical events, we are going to read those occurrences which helped to shape Israeli identity today (such as the myths of Tel Hai and of the 1948 War), built by a pattern of symbols and values which, still today, make Israeli assumptions, aspirations and attitude embody the constructs of Zionism.

1.1 The origins of the Zionist movement in the European context

In the Nineteenth century, Europe was about to face various transformations due to events that would characterize the entire century and the future of the continent itself. The echoes of the French Revolution and of Enlightenment followed the spread of ideals that contributed to the development of movements that sought the pursuit of civil and political rights. A strong nationalistic sentiment sparked among European peoples, causing the emergence of independent riots, spread across the continent; moreover, the industrial revolution became an opportunity to improve the social and economic position of many individuals, while simultaneously facilitating the processes of urbanization and "proletarianization" of the masses, thus preparing the path to schools of thought inspired by Socialism and Marxism. This explosive mixture of elements could not avoid to involve the existence of European Jews. They were still organized according to the criteria of the Jewish religion and thus had to measure with a change that was slowly spreading among the societies where they lived. It can be said that, modernity and the spirit of the epoch.

The identity challenge to European Jewish reality was not directed to homogeneous situations, but had to face a difference between the communities living in Eastern Europe or in Western European countries. Indeed, while for the first time, Jewish religion was officially called to confront with Western Europe was experiencing a “bourgeoisification” process involving the Diaspora favored by the opportunity to participate to public life and by the opportunities offered by the industrial revolution, the Eastern conditions was characterized by a general underdevelopment.

Indeed, in Western Europe, following the French Revolution⁴ and the emancipation of French Jews (1791), several decrees were emitted by other European nations⁵ in order to grant equal rights to the Jews living in those countries: «The walls of the ghettos [...] were demolished by the French Revolution⁶», in the territories of the Russian Empire numerous discriminatory initiatives against Jews were still taken, such as the 1791 Catherine II of Russia decree⁷, which forced Jews to live in “homogeneous territories⁸” (ie. inhabited areas) that formed an interrupted strip of land known as *Yiddishland*⁹, the land of the Yiddish language. These areas became the cradle of Eastern *Ashkenazi* Judaism, a real social microcosm, where communities were organized according to the *shtetl*¹⁰ model, a small village that survived thanks to subsistence economic activities, mainly trade and handicrafts. Precisely the ban on the Jews to work in the agricultural field, pushed them to deal with those brokerage activities, which subsequently gave birth to typical prejudices, origin of the aversion in

⁴ Hersch, I. H. *The French Revolution and the Emancipation of the Jews*, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 19, n. 3, 1907, pp. 540–565.

⁵ Luzzatto Voghera G., *L'antisemitismo: domande e risposte*, Feltrinelli Editore, 1994, pp. 19–21.

⁶ Stein L., *Zionism*, Ernst Benn, 1925, p. 23 quoted in Marzano A., *Storia dei sionismi. Lo Stato degli ebrei da Herzl a oggi*, Carocci Editore, 2017, p. 22.

⁷ After the partition of Poland (end of the Eighteen century), more than 5 million Jews lived inside the Russian empire.

⁸ “The Residency Zone” was the western region of the Russian Empire bordering the Central European powers, where the Jews were confined by the imperial power from 1791 to 1917. This area corresponded to the largest part of what is now Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, Ukraine and the western parts of Russia. It was created by the Empress of Russia Catherine II in 1791, after several attempts aborted by her predecessors to expel Jews from Russia, unless they converted Orthodox Christianity. The reasons for the creation of this zone were primarily economic and nationalist.

⁹ It is the name given to a vast area in which the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe lived before their destruction during the Second World War.

¹⁰ It is an East European market town, in private possession of a Polish magnate, inhabited mostly but not exclusively by Jews. The concept of *shtetl* culture describes the traditional way of life of Eastern European Jews. Shtetls are portrayed as pious communities following Orthodox Judaism, socially stable and unchanging despite outside influence or attacks.

Gentile societies¹¹. The fundamental activities were *Torah* or Talmudic studies and society was dominated by *Yiddishkeit*¹², a cultural trait that involved the individual in any aspect of his existence. Meanwhile, in the Jewish German world, *Haskalah*¹³ (Jewish Enlightenment) developed. It was born in XVIII century and it was one of the primary causes of the start of the Jewish Reform movement¹⁴. The Reform movement tried to bring Judaism closer to contemporary European standards of behavior, combining reason and Judaism, in conjunction with the emergence of the first forms of Jewish emancipation. This line of thought has as its objective not so much to change the nature of Jewish identity but to create open positions towards surrounding societies¹⁵. For this reason, *maskilim* (followers of the *Haskalah*) thought it necessary to reform some of the institutions of the Jewish world to better prepare for the encounter between the two cultures.

There was never a genuine attempt to reform the religious world, because *Haskalah* focus was about culture and the way of perceiving society; relationship with religion, however, began to be re-evaluated in a rational way, with the aim of establishing a balance with it, resizing its role (for example, the legal one). There were even some episodes in which some Jews, influenced by *maskilim* and by the new proximity to European culture, were attracted by the possibility of being fully integrated into society and, thus, converted to Christianity. The occurrence of these cases contributed to ending the experience of Western Jewish Enlightenment. Some influences also touched the lives of Russian communities, which were stimulated to develop a kind of political activism, which led to the organization of campaigns for emancipation and the formation of politically committed groups; in this way it was attempted to bring Judaism closer to contemporary European standards of behavior. These attempts led to two fundamentally different outcomes, but equally significant: on one hand, assimilation and, on the other, Jewish nationalism, both fundamental to the birth and development of the Zionist movement.

¹¹ Vercelli C., *Israele: storia dello Stato, dal sogno alla realtà. 1881 – 2007*, Giuntina, 2007, p. 66.

¹² Literally means "Jewishness", or better, "a Jewish way of life". It can refer to Judaism or forms of Orthodox Judaism, but also it has come to mean the "Jewish essence" of Ashkenazi Jews in general and the traditional Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern and Central Europe in particular. From a more secular perspective it is associated with the popular culture or folk practices of Yiddish-speaking Jews, such as popular religious traditions, Eastern European Jewish food, Yiddish humor, *shtetl* life, and *klezmer* music.

¹³ Literally, *Haskalah* comes from the Hebrew word *sekhel*, meaning "reason or intellect" and the movement was based on rationality. It encouraged Jews to study secular subjects, to learn both the European and Hebrew languages, and to enter fields such as agriculture, crafts, the arts and science. The *Haskalah* eventually influenced the creation of both the Reform and Zionist movements.

¹⁴ The major author of this movement was Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) who tried to connect reason with Judaism.

¹⁵ Jewish virtual library, (www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org).

1.1.1 “*Le shanà habaà beYerushalayim*”: next year in Jerusalem

The common element between the different experiences of Western and Eastern European Judaism consisted in the Jewish tradition and in its ancient nostalgia for the Land of Fathers, Zion¹⁶. The reference to a distant but never forgotten Land has, for centuries, been the common denominator for individuals and communities dispersed throughout the world; the Jewish theological doctrine establishes the relationship between the people of Israel and God in the mediation carried out by the this land: People, Land and God therefore constitute an indissoluble unity, called *berith* (covenant); in the Bible, the term recalls to remind the alliance¹⁷ between *Yhwh* and the people of Israel, this is the deepest concept of the Jewish world, as it implies a relationship of exclusivity between the one true God and his chosen people.

The Exodus from Egypt should have been concluded with the arrival of Jews in the Promised Land and this would have been the reward for having faith in God and respecting the Decalogue. The Jewish European Diaspora¹⁸ represented instead the opposite situation and starting from this premise we can understand why for many Jews the condition of exiles was considered a divine punishment for not respecting *Yhwh*'s commandments; the dispersion of the people was therefore a punishment imposed by God and would come to an end only with a spiritual return on the straight path, realizing the divine plan of bringing his people back into the Land of the Fathers.

There is thus a link with the Land that is not only physical, but is strengthened and maintained through the *Torah* and the tradition. This collective feeling of return was (and is) a point of convergence for the identity of the Jewish communities scattered around the world, convergence of a memory reinforced by liturgical tradition: for example there is a religious precept to reside, at least

¹⁶ Zion is a toponym for Mount Zion, but it also indicates the hill and fortress of Jerusalem. The name Zion was first used for the Jebusite fortress (“the stronghold of Zion”), on the southeast of Jerusalem, below the Ophel and the Temple Mount. On its capture by David it was renamed “City of David”. In poetry Zion was used by way of synecdoche for the whole of Jerusalem Zion often referred by way of metonymy to Judea or the people of Judea.

¹⁷ Among the many alliances stipulated, the most important were: the promise made to Abraham in which he is assured of a progeny during the centuries that will settle in the land of Palestine and the one made with Moses at Mount Sinai after the gateway from Egypt. On this occasion, *Yhwh* revealed his commandments to the chosen People promising protection and the Land of Israel, provided they did comply with these laws: the *mitzvot*, expressed in the *Torah*.

¹⁸ When we speak of Diaspora we must consider that it does not refer only to the Jewish presence in Europe from the Middle Ages onwards, but rather began in 586 b. c. to the Babylonians, with the destruction of the second temple. The Jewish state came to an end in 70 a. d. when the Second Temple was destroyed under Roman domination. From that moment on, Jewish history would be the division and dispersion story we encounter in the historical period we are considering.

for period, in the land of Israel, or the orientation of the prayer towards Jerusalem, or the concluding part of the *Seder*¹⁹ of *Pesach*²⁰, which reads, “next year in Jerusalem” (*Le shanà habaà beYerushalayim*).

The ambition to return, from the earliest times of exile, had mingled with a messianic theme of redemption and salvation; an act that would have been accomplished precisely by the advent of the *Messiah*, who would bring the people of God back to Zion. All this resulted in a passive wait on the part of the Jewish people²¹, doing little to realize the *kibbutz galuyyot*²², which would eventually mark the end of exile and suffering.

However, it should be emphasized that the concept of *Eretz Yisrael*, corresponding to the Promised Land, is not univocal if it is to be transposed on a geographic map, so it is necessary to distinguish what is based on the divine promise and what derives from the concrete existence of the ancient Israeli kingdoms²³. There are several visions: the first one, the most maximalist (adopted up of Revisionist Zionism²⁴) considers the extension of this territory going from the Sinai to the Euphrates river, but there is little evidence in the scriptures²⁵. The second one, more restrictive, is based on the divine intervention recalled in the *Torah*, recalling *Eretz Yisrael* to the area between the Mediterranean and Jordan river's eastern bank²⁶. The latter is the dominant version of the tradition and of the Zionist movement until the year of the creation of Transjordan²⁷, separating this area from the rest of the Mandate of Palestine. So, referring to the biblical tradition when it comes to define

¹⁹ During the first two nights of *Pesach* it is used to have dinner following a special order of food and prayers called the *seder*, during which the whole story of the conflict with the pharaoh is told, until the final escape following the *Haggadah* of *Pesach*.

²⁰ It is the Jewish Passover, which lasts for eight days and reminiscent of the exodus and the liberation of the Israelite people from Egypt.

²¹ Ravitzky A., *Religious Radicalism and Political Messianism in Israel*, in *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p 15.

²² Ingathering of Exiles. Israel is realizing the vision of the Biblical prophets and the ideals of the Zionist movement in serving as the gathering place for Jews from all parts of the world.

²³ Vercelli C., *Israele: storia dello Stato...*, op. cit. , pag. 30

²⁴ The Revisionist Zionism thinking line finds political expression in the creation by Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinsky of the Zionist Revisionist Party. It is characterized as a nationalist, anti-communist and liberal.

²⁵ Isaac R. J., *Israel Divided: Ideological Politics in the Jewish State*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, pp. 20-21.

²⁶ The territory shown in this current corresponds to the Israeli boundaries during the tribal period in the Land of Canaan; it had its greatest expansion under the realms of David and Solomon.

²⁷ Trans-Jordan was a British protectorate established in April 1921. It was agreed that Abdullah bin Hussein would administer the territory under the auspices of the British Mandate for Palestine with a fully autonomous governing system. On May 25th 1946, the Emirate became the “Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan”, achieving full independence on June 17th 1946.

the meaning of the Promised Land is useful, not because it helps us in defining it geographically, but because it allows us to grasp the context within which this connotation was born and the value it still has today.

Despite the rampant secularization in Europe and the assimilationist choice of a part of the Jewish world, another group made the way of Jewish nationalism and, even though Zion had no longer the meaning it represented for their parents, it became the «Detached symbol from its original geographic naming: an honorary title which could have been applied to any country where Jews lived, anticipating the solution of the Jewish problem, through emancipation²⁸». Zionism is rooted in the Jewish tradition and in the élan of 19th-century nationalist ideologies; it deeply outdistanced itself from the messianic-religious vision, undergoing rabbis and orthodox Jewry's opposition: they were against the secular attitude of the Zionist project²⁹, in which divine intervention was not contemplated anymore. Zionism, in a certain sense, was a rebellion against the passive attitude of European Jews, moving the focus of Redemption on human initiative³⁰.

Despite this fundamental discrepancy, the origins of this political movement cannot be fully understood without taking into account Jewish cultural heritage, of which Zionism is its modern evolution³¹ and factual fulfillment. The same term, Zionism, was used for the first time only at the end of the century (1890), by Nathan Birnbaum in his magazine "*Selbst-Emancipation!*" (Self-Emancipation), whose meaning derives from the ancient desire to return to Zion³² (*shivat Zion*). With Zionism, returning to Zion is understood as a social and political act that would put an end to the oppressed minority condition of Jews in the Diaspora.

1.1.2 Before Zionism existed: the forerunners

With the emergence of Enlightenment in Europe, there was a spread of behaviors that stigmatize any form of community specialism, encouraging the centralization and modernization of

²⁸ Halpern B., *The Idea of the Jewish State*, Harvard University Press, 1969, quoted in Marzano A., *Storia dei sionismi...*, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁹ For a further analysis about the emergence of secularism in Jewish cultural environment and its patterns see Jobani Y., Three Basic Models of Secular Jewish Culture, *Israel Studies*, vol.13, n.3, pp. 162-165.

³⁰ Walzer M., *Zionism and Judaism: the Paradox of National Liberation*, *The Journal of Israeli History*, vol. 26, n.2, September 2001, pp. 125-136.

³¹ Bidussa D. explains in "*Il Sionismo politico*" (Unicopoli Editions, 1993), how the term "Zionist" is mistakenly conceived as a synonym for "Jew"; surely it involves Jewish identity in terms of historical, cultural, political and psychological redefinition, but such overlap does not fully match. It creates instead a renewal, a solicitation of the self-conscious dynamics of Jewish cultural and political actors.

³² In this sense, the term Zion is used in a wider sense, not only by indicating the city of Jerusalem and the territory of ancient Israel, but also referring to the places of a people's history and memory.

political orders. In a similar context, the autonomy of Jewish communities appeared to be opposed to the new principles and was thus abolished; the criterion that was underlined was the granting of individual civil rights in exchange for the suppression of political communities and preserving cult associations: it was the root of emancipation³³.

But what emerged clearly was the crisis of religion. Members of Jewish communities responded in three different ways³⁴: denying the existence of ongoing processes and trying to keep the new ideals far from their community reality (isolationists); trying to adapt their culture to modernity and responding to the ongoing challenges (adaptationists); participating in the process of emancipation with the certainty that there was no contradiction in being Jewish and at the same time modern, thus seeking social and political assimilation (assimilationists). The Zionist movement, as the Jewish expression of the idea that nationalism and sovereignty were the proper answers to the “Jewish question³⁵”, belongs to this latter group. From a cultural point of view, those who adhered to these new trajectories had to reformulate their relationship with Judaism; emancipation allowed the process of re-elaboration of the meaning and function of Judaism in modern society.

Given the extreme heterogeneity of diasporic Judaism and since there was no unified theological and spiritual institution, it is not a surprise that the idea of the State in Jewish thought has never been translated into a unified and shared position. Moreover, despite this strong common nostalgia, the hypothesis of a reconstruction of the Jewish homeland was not shared by all Jews. Rabbis, for example, considered belonging to Judaism as a religious bond and did not recognize the Jewish people as a national community. Above all, from their point of view, the project of returning to the Promised Land was basically a heresy³⁶, a grievous infraction of messianic project.

The fundamental problem was the definition of the role of religion within the new political experience, which represented a paramount friction; indeed, if religious identity remained the main factor in defining Jewishness³⁷, it was not enough to reach a shared definition of Judaism (still today, one of the more intense debates is about the definition of the juridical concept in order to define who is a Jew and who is not).

Political Zionism thus appeared on the scene with a new idea of community, no longer based on the Diaspora dispersed among Gentiles, but on the patterns of a national society. If Judaism had guaranteed the preservation of Jews through separation, as something different from the surrounding societies, Zionism was asking to continue their survival as equals: becoming citizens

³³ During the nineteenth century, the legislation of almost all European states abolished the limits imposed over the centuries to Jewish communities and granted them civil rights equal to those accorded to all other citizens.

³⁴ Akiva O., *Israel: Politics, Myths and Identity Crises*, Pluto Press, 1994, p. 15.

³⁵ That is, the persistence, in a more or less latent way, of some anti-Semitic hostility.

³⁶ Klein C., *Israele: lo stato degli ebrei*, 2000, Giunti, p. 20.

³⁷ Akiva O., *Israel: Politics, Myths and Identity Crises*, Pluto Press, 1994, p. 12

meant to go “beyond the walls of the ghetto³⁸”, which had preserved Jewish lifestyle, but also isolating the communities from the outer world.

The core of this national movement was not of a religious nature, but it had to do with the awakening of the nationalistic feelings of the Jews and the liberation of the masses from the rigidity of the patterns of Jewish community life in exile. These rigorous collective schemes were responsible for the extinction of national aspirations, enslaved in a closed intellectual and moral systems, unable to elevate and to allow individuals to be aware of their conditions. The national idea was still overshadowed by the idea of social and political emancipation, even if during that period, the struggle for equal rights in the West was coming to an end because the idea of equality and emancipation was losing its impetus,

The three precursors of political Zionism were rabbis Yehuda Alkalai, rabbis Zvi Hirsch Kalisher and Moshe Hess, who preceded the actual emergence of the mass movement; the identification of these forerunners is made simply on the basis of the analogies between their thoughts and the Zionist idea, analyzing them in the historical process that brought to the birth of the future political movement³⁹.

Yehuda Alkalai⁴⁰ (1798-1878) was very involved in the Balkan nationalist aspirations and in their attempts to gain independence from the now decadent Ottoman Empire. From this experience, the idea of a national freedom was born in Alkalai's mind, for he was convinced of the possibility of a new “Jewish Redemption⁴¹” through the creation of Jewish settlements in the Holy Land, founded through human effort and commitment. However, he believed that this self-redemption was directly in the tradition⁴².

Alkalai was convinced that in order to safeguard the security and freedom of the Jews, they should have striven for a life within their Forefathers homeland. In his essay “The Third Redemption” (1843) it was explained how this event would not have been done miraculously, but rather thanks to the efforts of the Jewish people who should have been organized and reunited, breaking the Diaspora conditions.

Rabbi Kalisher⁴³ (1795-1874), like Alkalai, was profoundly influenced by the galloping nationalism that in XIX century was investing all over Europe. Particularly present in the thought of Kalisher, expressed in the work “In search of Zion” (1862), was the awareness of the poor conditions of Jews in Europe and that the beginning of Redemption would come with the human effort: «The

³⁸ Vercelli C., *Israele: storia dello stato*., op. cit., p. 35.

³⁹ Katz J., *The Forerunners of Zionism*, in Renharz Y. and Shapira A., *Essential papers on Zionism*, Cassell, 1996, p.38.

⁴⁰ He was born in Sarajevo in 1798, but he passed his childhood in Jerusalem.

⁴¹ Hertzberg A., *The Zionist idea: a historical analysis and reader*, Jewish Publication Society, 1959, p.104.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 105.

⁴³ He lived in Posen, Poland, witnessing various attempts by the Poles to regain their freedom.

redemption of Israel [...] should not be imagined as a sudden miracle. [...] When many piety and connoisseurs of the Torah will go to the land of Israel and settle in Jerusalem [...] The Creator will listen to them and affection on the day of the Redemption⁴⁴». This objective would be achieved not by divine intervention, but through the awakening of the philanthropists' interest and through the consent of powerful nations. The idea of the Messiah was now secondary and Alkalai devoted himself to engage in this challenge some great philanthropists, such as Lord Rothschild⁴⁵ and Sir Moses Montefiore⁴⁶, convincing them to buy land from the Ottoman Empire⁴⁷.

Moshe Hess⁴⁸ (1812-1875) presented some discrepancies in his thinking with respect to the first two authors, for he was a man coming from Western secular culture and a supporter of socialist ethics. The greatest danger he identified was this extreme attempt by European Jews to be accepted by their respective fellow citizens, even at the expense of eliminating every stretch of Jewishness and denying their origins. The point was that no reform of religion would have been radical enough to make Jews be accepted, thanks to this intuition, he was able to identify an important change in the meaning of anti-Semitism: slowly, hatred against the Jews was justified no longer on religious level, but on the racial one.

The more Jews denied their belonging to a national community, more their position would deteriorate. Indeed, for Hess, there was a kind of insuperable unfamiliarity, even after emancipation, since the latter was based on a sense of universalistic justice and not on sincere respect for Jews. So, the exiled Jew who denied his own national identity would never have gained the respect of the Gentiles: he would remain a hybrid, which would not convince his compatriots of his loyalty towards the nation⁴⁹. The only hope was to maintain the bond between the Jews and their spiritual center, a unit that has been maintained through the centuries all over the world, and which has preserved this identity as a people: «There is a nation scattered throughout the world and dispersed among the peoples»⁵⁰. Emancipation would have led to the historical need for a national solution to the Jewish question, thus overcoming the purely religious conception of Judaism. The Jewish national movement had found in these premises its *raison d'être*.

⁴⁴ Kalischer Z. H., *Seeking Zion*, in Hertzberg A., op. cit., p. III- 4.

⁴⁵ This noble title Rothschild Baron is a title created in the United Kingdom in 1885 for Sir Nathan Rothschild, a member of the Rothschild family. This dynasty played a key role in the creation of the State of Israel, since it fundamentally funded the project since the very first attempts.

⁴⁶ Italian-British entrepreneur and philanthropist. He founded *Mishkenot Sha'ananim* in 1860, one of the first settlements of the New Yishuv.

⁴⁷ Katz J., *The Forerunners of Zionism*, in Reinhartz Y. and Shapira A., *Essential Papers on Zionism*, Cassel, 1996, p.42.

⁴⁸ Born in 1921, he was a great friend and collaborator of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

⁴⁹ Moshe H., *Rome and Jerusalem*, in Hertzberg A., op. cit., p. 121.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

1.1.3 The emergence of the Jewish question and the rise of Zionism

The recognition of a Jewish question was the fundamental factor in the evolution of the Zionist movement but, at the same time, a failure for those modernized Jewish elites integrated in the countries of origin; a defeat that saw emigration as an obligation, imposed by the circumstances rather than a virtuous choice. The tragedies of the Russian pogroms of 1881-84⁵¹ and the Dreyfus Affaire⁵² in France were necessary to prepare the ground for the widespread of Zionism.

The pogroms were followed by a series of laws that institutionalized Jews discrimination: restricted access to higher education, universities and professions, limitations to their freedom of movement and residence. The effect these horrible actions had on Eastern Jews was dramatic, it seemed that these events meant to Jewish communities that it was no longer possible for them to live in Russia. Thus, without an organization or collective coordination, they began emigrating; most of them went to the United States and many others moved to the cities of Central and Western Europe.

Leo Pinsker⁵³ (1821-1891) published in 1882 his book “Self-Emancipation! The appeal of a Russian Jew to his brothers”. He was paradoxically part of the more integrated Russian Jewish group that had always positively seen the possibilities of assimilation, becoming a moderate supporter of gradual social integration. For these reasons, he was struck and disappointed from pogroms far more than his contemporaries, because he had put great faith in emancipation, but the pogroms had destroyed this hopeful vision, prompting him to advise mass emigration. Pinsker realized that the essence of the problem resided in the fact that the Jews were perceived as a non-assimilable element, “not digestible by any nation⁵⁴”. The Jew represented for the Gentiles an irrational residual of the medieval heritage because European Jewry continued to persist in an unnatural condition: without a Land, without a Country; having no territory to exercise their sovereignty on, meant to lack the basis for mutual respect, besides the fact that international law principles, ruling relationships among nation, were in the Jewish case inapplicable. This was the foundation that guaranteed fairness of treatment and respect of human rights.

Pinsker was pushed by a deep sense of shame, because these sad events had not only revealed the rejection that Russian society had expressed against the Jews, despite their efforts to integrate, but had mostly revealed their helplessness and humiliating situation: «Insulted, robbed, ill-treated and

⁵¹On March 13th 1881, a handful of Russian revolutionaries assassinated Tsar Alexander II and anti-Semites spread the rumor that the assassins were Jews, causing a subsequent wave of pogrom that invested the entire Russian empire.

⁵²It was a political scandal that divided broke out in France, from 1894 until its resolution in 1906. The scandal began with the treason conviction of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a young French artillery officer. Sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly communicating French military secrets to the German Embassy in Paris.

⁵³Polish doctor, adhered to *Haskalah* and moved to Odessa, where he died.

⁵⁴Pinsker L., *Auto-Emancipation: An appeal to his people by a Russian Jew*, in. Hertzberg A., op. cit., p. 182.

dishonored; we don't dare defend ourselves and, what is worse, all this is accepted as natural [...] You can prove your patriotism a thousand times ... the same, one morning you will discover that you are considered foreigners and an enraged multitude will remind you that in the end you are nothing but vagabonds and parasites [...]»⁵⁵.

He argued that they had a totally wrong to approach, indeed, there was in some degree a rejection of the actual circumstances. This denial led to the continuous appeal to justice and equality as a solution instead of using a rational approach. «You are fool, because you expect human nature, from something that has always been devoid of humanity. You are unworthy because you have no love for yourself and respect for your nation»⁵⁶.

Pinsker insisted on the importance of not losing the propitious moment represented by a series of circumstances that were determining the fate of many European peoples; the proposed solution was thus Jewish emigration towards a land that would guarantee them a permanent shelter. Times were therefore potentially allying with the Jewish cause and, even though there wasn't yet a charismatic leader able to lead a coordinated general action, the existing small associations constituted a good starting point for the great national project.

In the same years, many movements came up with the ultimate goal of favoring the emigration in Palestine; the first true expression of modern Zionism was a small group called *Hovevei Zion* (those who love Zion). The method by which they proposed to restore the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel was very concrete: manual work and man's commitment would have fostered the change that would have concretely taken place through the acquisition and cultivation of the land. In a few years, this organization grouped dozens of groups with the same intent, which eventually came together in the *Hibbat Zion* movement.

When Pinsker published his work "Self-Emancipation!", it became their ideological manifestation and the author was placed at the top of the movement. The influence that this organization had on the Russian thinker was fundamental, in fact, for him the Promised Land began to acquire the predominant and exclusive role in being the chosen place for the future Jewish nation. On the scene, there was also another group called *Bilu* (acronym of "Bet Ya'akov Lekw veNelkah", "Jacob's house, come and walk") which will be of great importance for subsequent developments of the Zionist movement: « (The Jews) slept, immersed in the false dream of assimilation [...] now, thanks to God, they woke up. [...] The pogroms woke you up. [...] We want a dwelling in the country that belongs to us, because it is recorded as ours in the archives of history [...]»⁵⁷. Although only a few *Biluim*

⁵⁵ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p. 29.

⁵⁶ Pinsker L., *Auto-Emancipation...*, op. cit., p. 189.

⁵⁷ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., pag. 31.

reached Palestine from 1882 to 1884, they had great importance, being the vanguard and introducing the mystic of the pioneers, in Zionist ideology⁵⁸.

During those years, from 1881 to 1903, the First *Aliyah*⁵⁹ took place, consisting in pioneering groups (from 20,000 to 30,000 *olim*⁶⁰) emigrating to Palestine and building the first settlements by working as simple farmers. The first agricultural colonies such as Rishon leTzion, Petakh Tikvah and Rosh Pinah were built; the new villages took the name of the new *Yishuv*⁶¹. Although the participation of *Hibbat Zion* members was low compared to the numbers desired by Pinsker, their activity, nicknamed "practical Zionism"⁶², paved the way for the advent of Theodore Herzl and his political Zionism, which transformed this movement from elite ideology into a political force.

1.2 Political Zionism

What specifically involved the fate of Jewish communities was the spread of a new type of hatred, which was called anti-Semitism. Many had tried to justify the hatred of the Jews, but the reality was that the anti-Jewish sentiment was so rooted in psychology of European societies, that it could also have been compared to an anomaly passed down from one generation to another and «since it was transmitted for two millennia, was incurable⁶³». Anti-semitism is a modern term, highlighting the Fact that Jews were no longer rejected for the religious factor, but for elements linked to the new, modern world.

Theodore Herzl⁶⁴ (1860-1904) recognized that anti-Semitism derived from a new phenomenon: the politics of masses; when the Affaire Dreyfus took place, he had the occasion to follow the trial very close as news correspondent from Paris for the important Viennese newspaper "*Neue Frei Press*"; this episode contributed to arouse his sensitivity to the Jewish problem which was already very acute. His awareness about the Jewish question and his perception of the lurking existential danger were

⁵⁸ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 16, p. 1038-1039.

⁵⁹ *Aliyah* is the Jewish immigration from the Diaspora to the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*), also defined as the act of "ascending". "Making *aliyah*" by moving to the Land of Israel is one of the most basic tenets of Zionism.

⁶⁰ This wave of immigrants consisted mostly of Jews from Eastern Europe. Most of them were family members who embarked on the journey to the Promised Land for religious reasons and with the hope of improving their conditions. It can be said that they had no political purpose.

⁶¹ It was formed by the settlements and the Jewish residents in the land of Israel from the first *aliyah*, until the establishment of the State of Israel.

⁶² It was intended to pursue the Zionist ideal in a concrete way, realizing on a practical level, without following diplomatic or political paths

⁶³ Vercelli C., *Israele: storia dello stato...*, op. cit., p. 53.

⁶⁴ He was born in Budapest in 1860. He was educated in the spirit of the German-Jewish Enlightenment, and learned to appreciate secular culture.

matured during the years: emancipation, even if it succeeded, was based on abstract principles and it did not win the hearts and minds of the people who refused to accept Jewish citizens as an integral part of society.

So, Herzl's conclusion was very simple, there was no point fighting anti-Semitism, the only option was to circumvent it; the main attempt of Zionism became the achievement of "normality"⁶⁵, meaning the obtaining of a situation for European Jews accepted and considered regular by the other national societies.

In 1986, he wrote "*Der Judenstaat: Versucheiner Moderner Lösung der Judenfrage*" (The Jewish State, Attempt for a Modern Solution to the Jewish Problem). The basic idea was simple, restoring the Jewish state. His work had a great impact because of the simplicity and immediacy of the concept that was expressed, the starting point was the assumption that unfortunately anti-Semitism had to be taken as a given and immutable variable in the equation that defined situation of Diaspora communities in Europe, which meant the impossibility of assimilation. «We have sincerely tried to join the national communities in which we live, trying to preserve the faith of our fathers. We are not allowed. In vain we are patriots [...]. In our native homelands, where we have lived for centuries, we are still declared aliens [...]»⁶⁶.

Herzl considered the Jewish issue not as a problem of social or religious origin (as it had been in the Middle Ages), but of political reason: it was a national matter. Starting from these circumstances, it resulted that the only plausible solution was of a political nature, that to say the constitution of an independent state whose sovereignty was in the hands of the Jews: «Let's give us given sovereignty over a piece of land on the Earth's surface sufficient to satisfy our righteous needs, everything else we will provide it on our own»⁶⁷.

These ideas led the author to emphasize the possibility for the Jewish in the Diaspora to renew himself, to "rise from their ashes" and to recover the honor, pride, and respect from the gentiles; refreshing traditional Judaism and transforming it into "muscular Judaism"⁶⁸. Much emphasis was placed on the central role that the Jews would play in fulfilling this project, trying to shake them from their torpor and inviting them to action by focusing their resources on the collective effort. Herzl was convinced that the times were ripe to make that what once seemed like a dream could finally become reality.

In order to achieve the conditions of return, a Jewish society should have been built and it would have founded the state, fully expressing the political modernity of political Zionism, which totally differentiates from the religious one because it rejects the passivity of the individuals: «The

⁶⁵ Rotenstreich N., *Zionism: past and present*, SUNY Press, 2012, p. 67.

⁶⁶ Herzl T., *Lo Stato ebraico*, Il Melangolo, 1992, p 27.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

⁶⁸ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p. 34.

construction of a Jewish nation, which forms a political body, which wants the creation of a sovereign state in the Land of Israel, is the fundamental objective of this doctrine and this movement⁶⁹».

Zionist project was endowed with a political body in 1897 with the first World Zionist Congress held in Basel⁷⁰, during which the World Zionist Organization was founded; the program adopted was very simple: «Zionism strives to get a publicly recognized and legally guaranteed focal point for the Jewish people in Palestine. In order to achieve this goal, the congress proposes the following methods: 1. Encouraging the principle of colonization of Palestine by Jews who are farmers, agricultural workers and artisans; 2 Unifying and organizing all Jewish communities in local and larger groups in accordance with the laws of their respective countries; 3. Strengthening individual consciousness and Jewish national consciousness; 4. Activating the necessary means to obtain the consent of those governments that can favor the realization of the aims of Zionism⁷¹».

The movement thus came to a decisive stage for its development on August 29th 1897, when the first Zionist congress started in Basel. Though it did not start under good auspices, because of the strong opposition by some Jewish communities and German rabbis, the goal of institutionalizing Zionism, bringing together Judaism representatives, was achieved. In fact, congressional participants decided to create organs that would represent the newborn Zionist Organization (*haHistadrut haZion*) on a political, legal and moral level: the Society of Jews⁷² would have played the role of the “moral person” of the movement and the Jewish Company⁷³ instead would incarnate the “legal person⁷⁴”.

Equally important, from a symbolic point of view, the hymn (*Hatikvah*⁷⁵), the hope, and the flag of the Zionist movement were chosen; the latter was inspired by the *tallith*, the Jewish prayer shawl with the *Magen David* in the center. In this case we can see how Zionism had wisely used Jewish tradition, transforming it and utilizing it to structure a Zionist civil religion, which will become the

⁶⁹ Greilsammer I., *Le Sionisme*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2005 p.5.

⁷⁰ According to Herzl's idea, this assembly was to be a kind of parliament for those who adhered to the Zionist cause. In this Congress, Herzl was elected President of the World Zionist Organization.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁷² Considered as the governing body of the national movement, it had scientific and political tasks for the foundation of the Jewish state. It also had to gather any evidence of the Jewish desire to return to the Promised Land. This institution has been recognized as a state-of-the-art training power, being the institutional core on which the state would later develop.

⁷³ His task was to acquire large land plots. It had its headquarters in London, where it was based in English jurisdiction and where it enjoyed government protection. Another fundamental task was to convert all the Jewish property that left European countries to the currency.

⁷⁴ Hertzberg A., *The Zionist idea...*, op. cit., p. 214.

⁷⁵ The melody is a arrangement of an Italian song from the 16th century, while the words are drawn from a poem by a Polish immigrant writer in Palestine in one of the colonies built in 1882.

foundation of Israeli civil religion⁷⁶. For these reasons, at the end of the Basel meeting, Herzl felt so confident to proclaim the famous sentence: «In Basel I founded the Jewish state ⁷⁷».

Max Nordau⁷⁸ (1849-1923) explained with these words what was meant by political Zionism: «The new Zionism that has taken the name of political Zionism differs from ancient religious and Messianic Zionism as it refuses any form of mysticism as it no longer identifies with messianism and does not expect a miracle to return to Palestine but wants to prepare it with its own efforts. New Zionism is only partly produced by the inner thrust of Judaism itself, the enthusiasm that Modern Jews have for its history and its martyrology; [...] for another part is the effect of two thrusts that came from outside: the idea of nationality that has dominated Europe's thinking and feeling for half a century and which has determined world politics; the anti-Semitism that the Jews of all countries suffer most or less ⁷⁹».

Political Zionism is therefore the result of the cultural conception of contemporaneity, from whom it seizes opportunities; this movement replied to the problems of being Jewish in the modern world, offering the national way as a solution, which is the complete and definitive vision of the fate of the Jews. It fits perfectly into the current of political movements of the late nineteenth century, not only by simple temporal coincidence, but also because Zionism shows all the constituent features of political, social and cultural modernity⁸⁰. Its ideological nature, while being varied, is due to the fact that it has the goal of building a society where Jews can live expressing their cultural, social and spiritual subjectivity in their entirety. In order to do this, a reform of Jewish self-perception and of the way they conceive the world is essential. In this framework, religion is the tool which allow the construction of the identity of a “new man”, whose essence is manual, agricultural work.

This means that the movement had a new approach towards the relationship between politics and religion; this does not mean a rejection of the traditional heritage, but exclusively of the passivity of the historical perspective, which is no longer awaited, but is loaded with a creative and interventionist élan. It is necessary to take part in the construction of its own history, becoming active political subjects.

⁷⁶ Bidussa D., *Il Sionismo...*, op. cit., p. 27.

⁷⁷ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p. 36.

⁷⁸ Max Nordau was a Hungarian Zionist leader who co-founded the World Zionist Congress.

⁷⁹ Nordau M., *Vecchio e nuovo sionismo*, in Bidussa D., *Il sionismo...*, op.cit., pp. 135-136.

⁸⁰ Gelvin J.L., *The Israel-Palestine Conflict. One Hundred years of War*, University of California, 2005, pp.14-15.

1.2.1 Cultural Zionism, another perspective

Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927)⁸¹ and his "cultural Zionism"⁸² were openly in contrast with Herzl's political Zionism; he criticized what seemed an exclusively materialistic process that had as its sole purpose the creation of a state. This new entity would be aimed at solving problems that Jews lived in the Diaspora, such as poverty or persecution that, by the way, could have come back in any case for they are linked to "material" factors. According to him, instead, the true focus of the Jewish question was the crisis that Judaism was experiencing. The material problems observed in the Diaspora would have ended not simply by the foundation of the state, rather religion would have been able to end the dispersal of exiles: for this reason, Zionism had to start from another assumption: the problem was spiritual.

Judaism was the strong element which would have provided the Jewish community with a powerful aim but, because of its weakened condition it was almost incapable of imprinting this turning point: «Speaking of national religion, we intend to recognize Judaism as basically national and all attempts by the "Reformers" to separate Jewish religion from its national element have had no results except to ruin both nationalism and religion. So, if you want to build and not destroy, religion must be taught on the basis of nationalism. [...] But if you talk of propagating "religious nationalism". I do not know what you are talking about. [...] From my point of view our religion is national, which means that it is the product of our national spirit⁸³».

Ahad Ha'am meant that Judaism could not be conceived as a purely spiritual element, but in order to achieve its full accomplishment it had to be realized concretely through the realization of a state. Exile Judaism could not develop independently respect to the surrounding societies, in fact the risk of confrontation with modern culture beyond the ghetto walls meant in many cases its disappearance. What was needed first was the creation of a homeland where conditions existed to develop one's own national culture: at that point men and women would grow and, thanks to the education received, they would have founded not just a State for the Jews, but finally a Jewish State in its essence. These arguments did not oppose political Zionism, but focused on the fact that its core was Judaism as a source of national culture.

Ahad Ha'am's vision imagined the creation of a complex of institutions inspired by the values of Jewish tradition. Herzl's conception of the State was thus based on political premises, Ahad Ha'am envisioned it as the concretization of ethical principles. The common element between these two

⁸¹ Literally means "one of the people", is the pen name of Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg. Born in the Ukraine he became the central figure in the movement for Cultural or Spiritual Zionism. Although raised in a *Hasidic* family, Ahad Ha'am was soon exposed to secular studies. Nonetheless he remained deeply committed to the Jewish people. It was his attempt to find a synthesis between Judaism and European philosophy.

⁸² Ahad Ha'am, *On nationalism and religion*, in A. Hertzberg, *The Zionist idea...*, op. cit., p., 291.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 262.

concepts was the awareness that all this could not have been done without a functional educational project for newcomers and new generations. This became one of the key points of Zionist leadership's vision, which attempted to develop an Hebrew education, starting with the recovery of the language and the creation of a modern school system, mainly aimed at the formation of the "future citizen" and the satisfaction of the work market demand for prepared Laborers. Thus, a nationalist education was asserted in order to introduce immigrants into a new historical reality.

1.3 Zionism: from theory in Europe, to practice in *Eretz Yisrael*

The Zionist movement was strengthened after the first Congress, with more solid bases and projected totally on the road that would have led to the realization of its project. But when 1903 Joseph Chamberlain (the British colonial secretary) offered Herzl a charter for part of East Africa, the Uganda Plan⁸⁴, it gave birth to one of the most crucial moment in the history of the Zionist movement, where ideology and myth clashed with practicality and reality.

The fact that a world power like Britain was offering a territory of its empire was a stunning achievement for a young political organization such Zionism: basically, it was the international recognition of this organization as a national movement.

Herzl brought the proposal before the Sixth Zionist Congress (August 24th 1903) and asked the members to evaluate genuinely the capacity of "Uganda" to absorb mass Jewish immigration; his position was motivated because the pivotal point of his vision did not reside in the precise geographical place where the Jewish state should have been, rather about negotiations in order to achieve the essential conditions that would have allowed the creation of a Jewish national home, giving priority to political and diplomatic action. In addition, his openness towards alternative solutions was given by a sense of urgency in the face of the distress experienced by Russian Jewry⁸⁵. After having encountered a harsh opposition, the Uganda plan was dropped⁸⁶. This episode was more important for its symbolic meaning than its political one; at the very end, the evocative power of the land of Israel won over any other consideration and demonstrated to be deeply interiorized in the very being of the Jews who adhered to the Zionist idea. Thus, Palestine was not just a territory that could be replaced with any other, in this way, the idea of returning the Jews to the land that made Zionism underwent a fascination that went beyond economic, political interests or benefits. After the Uganda crisis, the Land of Israel steadily moved to center stage, the territorial principle increasingly overriding the ethnic and the popular, even if declined with different shades, marking

⁸⁴ An area (13.000 square kilometers) that the World Zionist organization called Uganda but that was actually Kenya.

⁸⁵ Klein C. ,*Israel...*,op. cit., p. 1.

⁸⁶ 468 delegates voted in order to decide about the Uganda Plan, 292 were positive, 176 opposed and 143 abstained. As a result the 52,2% of the members did not agree with the solution proposed.

the beginning of a new phase for the movement⁸⁷. So, Zionism found itself into a deep depression, worsened with Herzl's sudden death in 1904; in that year, the members of the Second *aliyah*⁸⁸ (1904-1914) found affinity with the emergence of radical Zionist circles, such as *Poal'ei Zion*⁸⁹ (Zionist workers) and *HaPo'el HaTza'ir*⁹⁰ (the young worker)⁹¹. They wanted a different Zionism that would have been different from the "bourgeois version" typical of *Hovevei Zion*; this new interpretation would have been meaningful not only for the Jewish collectivity, but also for the individuals, embodying a psychological revolution in the image of the Jew (revolution of norms, behaviors and values). This emerging current emphasized national and cultural factors and the struggle for a life of authenticity in the Land of the Forefathers.

This increased importance of the role of ideology was due also to the convergence with some tragic events: another wave of pogrom broke out, from 1903 until 1906, this time in Kishinev (Russia). These occurrences were a turning point in the history of Zionist movement, indeed those pogroms awakened a sort of rebellion in the souls of Russian Jews against the persecutions that, since long time, were became a normal part in Jewish communities' daily life. They were also the factors that provoked the second *aliyah*; the vast majority of these immigrants were an elite group of about 40,000⁹² young men and women who came to Palestine motivated by national idealism (and by the desire to achieve better living conditions, first of all the freedom from the terror of the pogroms).

The second *aliyah* differed considerably from the first one because it contributed radically to the settlement project in *Eretz Yisrael* and because it gave rise to a radical transformation of the "new *Yishuv*"⁹³, whose political, economic, social and cultural structure was indelibly formed in those

⁸⁷ Almog S., *People and Land in modern Jewish Nationalism*, in Reinharz Y. and Shapira A., *Essential Papers...*, op. cit., p.55,

⁸⁸ It had a profound impact on the complexion and development of modern Jewish settlement in Palestine. Most of its members were young people inspired by socialist ideals.

⁸⁹ Movement that tried to base itself upon the Jewish proletariat whose ideology consisted of a combination of Zionism and socialism. Attempts to combine Jewish nationalism and Zionism with socialism.

⁹⁰ *HaPo'el HaTza'ir* was formed in 1905 by ten members of the second wave of Jewish immigrants. The newcomers sought to build a Jewish socialist homeland in Palestine. *HaPo'el HaTza'ir* commitment to practical Zionism and the conquest of *Labor* created a group that was dedicated to the creation of new Jewish agricultural communities.

⁹¹ Isaac R. J., *Party and politics in Israel: three visions of a Jewish state*, Longman, 1981. p. 29.

⁹² Jewish Virtual Library, (<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-second-aliyah-1904-1914>)

⁹³ The new immigrants defined their community in this way, in order to differentiate themselves from their predecessors, labeled as "old *Yishuv*". These definitions were supposed to clarify different objectives and lifestyles.

years. young men and women who came to Palestine motivated by national idealism (and by the desire to achieve better living conditions, first of all freedom from terrors of the pogroms).

Ber Borochov⁹⁴ (1881-1917) together with Aaron David Gordon⁹⁵(1856-1922) were the intellectuals that better interpreted the new convergence between Zionism and socialism⁹⁶; Borochov had in his mind the image of an “overturned pyramid” as the symbol of the Jewish social structure⁹⁷, he believed that the redemption of the Jewish people would only take place through the ingathering of the people in Palestine and through the transformation of this social organization: Socialism and Zionism could not be separated While Gordon was more active, contributing to the settlement of the land and joining the young immigrants; he thought that manual work was a sacred principle to devote himself and that this was particularly true for the Jewish people because the renaissance of the Jewish nation would have come true only through agricultural work. This was a regenerative process, “a revolution of the men in the Jew⁹⁸”, which would have allowed the redemption of the individuals thanks to the direct contact and unity with the Land: «[...] The fundamental question is to know whether this condition "Jewish work on Jewish land" is only a condition of secondary nature or an essential condition, a principle, a foundation without which the redemption of our land and our resurgence can't be conceived; [...] when we will have set Jewish work as the basis of our activity [...], then we will be able to really say that we have opened a new page of our work in *Eretz Yisrael* [...], we are missing work, not only as a link between man and the land, but also as the main force to create a national civilization[...]»⁹⁹.

1.3.1 The Zionist ethos and the emergence of a Hebrew culture

The new immigrants, laden with pioneering spirit, felt very close to the “new Jew” Zionist ideal; this envision included the return to the lost paradise, the rural community, a life close to nature

⁹⁴ Born in Ukraine, Ber Borochov was educated in a Russian high school. He was attracted by the revolutionary socialist trends of the time. In 1901, his interests in Jewish problems led him to establish the Zionist Socialist Workers Union. Active in Jewish self-defense, the organization was opposed by both the Russian Social Democrats and some of the Zionist leaders who disapproved of the combination of Zionism and socialism.

⁹⁵ David Gordon was one of the early supporters of the *Hibbat Zion* movement, and the first Hebrew journalist to propagate Zionist views through his publications.

Born in Vilna, Gordon received a *yeshiva* education and then became a student of the *Haskalah* movement.

⁹⁶This was particularly true for immigrants coming from a Russian cultural back-ground.

⁹⁷ Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁹⁸ Gordon A. D cited in Rubinstein A., *From Herzl to Rabin: The Changing Image of Zionism*, Holmes & Meier Publishers, 2000, p.25.

⁹⁹ Gordon A.D., *Il lavoro*, type-written copy in Italian, in Marzano A., *Storia...*, op.cit., p. 58.

and physical contact with the elements¹⁰⁰. Indeed, Zionism believed that a man who cultivated the soil had a profound connection with his Land and, living from his honest work, the pioneer developed a simple lifestyle, a love for nature and (above all) independence. This romantic vision was expressed fully by the Jewish agricultural worker, becoming the central image of Zionist propaganda.

Moreover, beyond the economic need and ideology purpose, there was a political vision behind this approach; according to “practical Zionists¹⁰¹” a concrete hold over the country’s territory through the purchase and the settlement of the land was believed to be the best way to create a Jewish stable presence in Palestine. Gordon’s concepts were completely assimilated by the new *olim*: *kibush ha’avoda* (conquering of the Labor) and *kibush ha’adama* (conquering of the land) became pivotal concepts of their action¹⁰².

Between 1908 and 1913, the Jews bought about 400,000 *dunam*¹⁰³ over a total territory of 27,000,000 *dunam*; the most prominent notables families sold the estates, attracted by the considerable rise of the prices (quickly increased thanks to the high Zionist demand). This business was also possible thanks to the help of the Palestine Land Development Company, founded in 1908 by the idea of Arthur Ruppin¹⁰⁴ (1876-1943); his project was very linear, that is, to create a Jewish economic and social system in which the production chain and the market were also Jewish.

It was under his suggestion that a *qevutzah* of young people, already part of a settlement near Hadera, had decided to move to uninhabited land on the shores of Lake Tiberias in Galilee; this experiment was giving rise to the first *kibbutz*¹⁰⁵ (called *Degania*, cornflower), a new experience that took shape¹⁰⁶ from a simple initiative from the bottom that, starting from the experiences and the daily necessities, managed collectively daily-life issues. The *kibbutz* became an expression of nationalist sentiment and socialist ideal and began to support the *moshavot*¹⁰⁷ of the first *aliyah*, but while the latter were based

¹⁰⁰ Rubinstein A., *From Herzl to Rabin: The Changing Image of Zionism*, Holmes & Meier Publishers, 2000, p. 19.

¹⁰¹ Shapira A., *Israel: A History*, Brandeis University Press, 2012, p. 35.

¹⁰² Marzano A., *Storia...*, op.cit., p. 58.

¹⁰³ Land measurement unit adopted from the Ottoman age to our days in various Arab countries to calculate the land surfaces. It equates to 1000 square meters.

¹⁰⁴ He was born in Germany and once in the Land of Israel, he became Head of the Palestinian Office (*haMisrad haEretz Yisrael*).

¹⁰⁵ The *kibbutz* is a community-based reality based on socialist principles and incarnating the highest principles of Zionism.

¹⁰⁶ In order to have a more detailed outline of *kibbutz* development and history, see the chapter The Kibbutz Movement, in Merhav P., *The Israeli Left: history, problems, documents*, Barnes, A. S. & Co. Inc., 1980. pp. 167-179.

¹⁰⁷ Typical form of agricultural cooperative, which brings together small farms founded by Labor Zionists in a small village.

on private property and the use of local Labor, the *kibbutzim* developed a totally Jewish community, with its economic system and independent from the others already existing.

The consequences of this approach had a dramatic impact on the relations with Arab workers who lived in the land of Palestine; essentially, the *fellahin*¹⁰⁸ were removed from the lands they cultivated and felt as their own (although they belonged to the *notables*, the aristocrats, who often lived in cities far from the lands, such as Jerusalem, Nablus, but also Damascus, Beirut or Istanbul¹⁰⁹); landowners also had great interest in selling those lands, not only because they were difficult to cultivate, but above all because the land value in Palestine grew by 5,000%¹¹⁰ between 1910 and 1944.

Local workers began thus to feel resentment towards the new Jewish settlers, which were increasingly a concrete threat. Thus, the first disagreements arose for economic and social reasons, but the situation was made more delicate by the frequent contacts between the two populations and, despite these attempts of coexistence, at the beginning of the XX century the nationalist question was becoming increasingly explicit assuming more and more relevance in the antagonisms between Jews and Arabs. Therefore, the famous phrase «a landless people for a land without a people¹¹¹» turned out to be basically wrong, presenting to the Zionists a further challenge: a choice about the nature of the relations that were to be established with the local Arab population.

The increase in tension led to the spread of a need felt by the *olim*, to be able to provide for self-defense, so every settlement had to be fortitude in order to become self-sufficient. The slogan was *avoda ivrit* (Jewish work) applied in the model of the *homat vemigdal* (the wall and the tower), so the settlement was conceived as a small citadel, capable of self-defense and of accomplishing that spiritual regeneration through manual activity. They had the task of ensuring the active possession of the territory, safeguarding the principle of social justice, educating its members to Labor cult and overcoming the outdated heritage of *Galut*¹¹².

It was thus spreading the “cult of strength” reinforced through the efforts and the struggle, the cult of a nation molded by workers: those were the fundamental values of the Zionist enterprise. This attitude was also expressed through the foundation in 1908 of military organization called

¹⁰⁸ *Fellah* is a farmer or agricultural laborer in the Middle East and North Africa. The word derives from the Arabic word for “ploughman” or “tiller”.

¹⁰⁹ In 1858, within the framework of the *tanzimat*, was created the “*Ottoman Land Code*”, requiring land owners to register ownership. The reasons behind the law were twofold: to increase tax revenue, and to exercise greater state control over the area

¹¹⁰ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p. 55.

¹¹¹ Shapira A., *Israel...*, op.cit., p. 36.

¹¹² It is a word that expresses the condition and feelings of a dispersed and homeless nation. This word refers to the historical awareness of the Jewish people of their condition, which began with the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (70 d. c.) and finished with the creation of the Jewish State.

*HaShomer*¹¹³ (the guardian) by a group of young activists, the objective of this under-covered group was the surveillance of the settlements and in few years, it became responsible of the security of many villages. With the time passing by, *HaShomer* began also to protect the workers in the fields, getting in contact with the local Arab population.

From the purchasing of the land and its farming, the focus was becoming also its protection: the agricultural worker was becoming also a soldier. Since that moment, going to Palestine would have been the choice not made by those men who had nothing to lose, but by pioneers who thought that: «History plays where no history has ever been produced [...]»¹¹⁴. Those who were part of this group embodied the ideal of the *halutz*, the pioneering fighter, who create the direct relationship with the physical space through agriculture and defense: the myth of a “nation in arms” was founded.

The pioneers of the second *aliyah* under-estimated the “Arab question”, concentrating all their efforts in hard work, in the face of almost prohibitive living conditions; their daily struggle against an adversary environment made those men and women part of the myth of Zionist narrative, becoming a model for the future generations of Israel. Thus, it was the “miracle” of creation, in which agricultural settlements and fields grew on arid or swampy soils. Indeed, a new society was created. The years between the first *aliyah* and the outbreak of World War One were crucial for the formation of a national culture, characterized by a secular Jewish identity, the use of Hebrew as the spoken language and the independence from *Galut* cultures¹¹⁵. Thus, a national education was created in order to promote the development of a native Hebrew culture, characterized by speaking Hebrew, a behavior that emphasized physicality and self-definition dialectically opposed to that of the Diaspora, clearly displaying a secular identity¹¹⁶.

Nevertheless, the most important change that occurred in Palestine was secularization of culture, even if a strong connection was maintained with Jewish tradition, celebrating festivals and rites of passage; basically, there was a difficulty of creating a new heritage without the sacrality given by the centuries-old ritual behind it. So, the Bible was the element that symbolized the connection with the national past; it was a guidebook to the local fauna and flora and to ancient settlement sites like River Jordan or Mount Gilboa; it was the “book of memory”¹¹⁷.

¹¹³ It took the name from Shimon Bar-Gyora, an hero of the Jewish rebellion against the romans in the I century d. c.. His motto was: «Through fire and blood Judea fall; through fire and blood it will rise again».

¹¹⁴ C. Vercelli, *Israele: storia dello stato...*, op. cit., pag. 130.

¹¹⁵ The basis of cultural rebirth was widely understood as the passage, the transformation, from the passive observant *yehudi* (Jew) of Diaspora to the secular, resourceful *ivri* (Hebrew), of *Eretz Yisrael*

¹¹⁶ Even-Zohar I., *The Emergence of a native Hebrew Culture in Palestine, 1882-1948*, in Reinhartz Y. and Shapira A., *Essential Papers...*, op. cit., p.730,

¹¹⁷ This expression originated in Exodus 17:14 and it was often used by Ahad Ha'am.

Despite this vivid cultural and educational effort, the attention of Zionist leadership was mainly focused on the most practical aspects of the project, such as welcoming and accommodating immigrants, considered the raw material that would have allowed the building of the state; they were pursuing a “territorial¹¹⁸” strategy, according to which the purchase of new lands was thus the absolute priority.

1.4 The Mandate Epoch

In the first decade of the XX century, British interest in the land of Palestine was increased once it became clear that the end of the Ottoman Empire was very close. Starting from spring 1915 the partition of the Middle East was a topic discussed between Britain and France and these secret talks led to the Sykes-Picot Agreement¹¹⁹ signed in 1916, which established the division of the territories of the Ottoman Empire under British and French authorities. Iraq, Transjordan and the route in Southern Palestine were under the British rule, while Syria and Lebanon were given to France. Western Palestine and the area from the south of the Sea of Galilee to north of Gaza was under international rule.

At the same time, Sir Arthur McMahon¹²⁰, acting on his government’s behalf, promised Sharif of Mecca Hussein bin Ali¹²¹ through correspondence that, in return for an Arab support against the Ottoman Empire¹²², Britain would support the creation of an independent Arab zone from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea¹²³. The contradiction between this promise and the agreement

¹¹⁸ Vercelli C., *Israele: storia dello stato...*, op. cit., p. 100.

¹¹⁹ Secret Agreement signed in 1916 between France and Great Britain. This treaty was about the future division of the territories of the Ottoman Empire, after the end World War I. France would take over the direct control of the Great Lebanon and the northwest coast of Syrian, while Britain would dominate the provinces of Basra and Baghdad. The space between these extremes should have been occupied by a large Arab state, actually divided into areas of influence under the great powers. The province called Palestine would be subject to a Franco-British rule.

¹²⁰ He was High Commissioner in Egypt.

¹²¹ Husayin Bin Ali was the last of the rulers belonging to the Hashemite dynasty nominated by the Sublime Gate. Thanks to his lineage with Prophet Muhammad, enjoyed enormous prestige among Arab populations, for he was known as the King of *Hijaz*. That is the reason why the British recognized the importance of his figure.

¹²² London was very concerned about the future of the region due to the precarious conditions in which the Ottoman Empire came. For this reason, the great British power was already thinking of the future layout of the region once the control of the Sublime Gate would have disappeared altogether. The chart between Mc Mahon and Husayin is precisely the emblem of British maneuvers to secure its influence in the Middle East.

¹²³ Hussein wanted to found an independent Arab state that included the Hijaz and other adjacent territories, in order to restore the caliphate.

with the French government was difficult to explain and this plot will become even more intricate with the Balfour declaration issued in 1917; the promises made by McMahon will be overturned and the frustrated hopes of the Arabs will join the feelings of anti-Zionist hostility that the people of Palestine began to manifest¹²⁴.

1.4.1 The Balfour Declaration and Weizman's Synthetic Zionism

Jewish presence in Palestine was not particularly opposed by the Ottoman Empire, as it was in a complex and delicate situation of evident decline. Thanks to the internal crisis the Sublime Gate had to face, Zionism could realize its immigration and settlement policies. However, the leadership of the World Zionist Organization was still looking for the support of a great power; after Herzl's failure with Istanbul¹²⁵, Chaim Weizmann¹²⁶ (1874-1952) succeeded in London.

One of his more important achievements was the reunification of the two currents that came into open conflict over the Uganda Plan, practical and political Zionism; following this appeasement, "synthetic Zionism"¹²⁷ born in 1907, he chose this name because this school of thought, on one hand, it supported the immigrants and pioneer's enterprise in Palestine and, on the other, it also attributed great importance to diplomatic action (especially towards English politicians), fundamental support to practical Zionism 's activities on the ground.

Thanks to his diplomatic initiatives, he obtained what he felt was his greatest achievement: the Balfour Declaration, written in 1917 by Lord Balfour (Foreign Minister of Lloyd George's government) to Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild, president of the British Zionist Federation. Those few words stated: « [...] His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and

¹²⁴ Sanders R. *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate of Palestine*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1983, p.229-255.

¹²⁵ Herzl long sought to obtain the support, or at least a nullity, from the Ottoman authorities for the mass entrance of Jews in the province of Palestine. In 1901 he met the sultan Abdul Hamid II, when he tried to obtain his consensus for the Jewish settlement of Palestine in exchange of economic benefits, but the sultan rejected the deal.

¹²⁶ He was a successful scholar and chemist. He became the strongest personality of the Zionist movement after Herzl's death and in 1920 he was elected President of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), covering that role until 1946.

¹²⁷ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro: Israele e il mondo arabo*, Il Ponte, 2003, p. 30.

religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country [...]»¹²⁸.

The analysis and the literature devoted to the motivations that prompted the British representatives to release that document is wide and in-depth, there was a sort of convergence between British interests and the Zionist cause. The international arena was changing and among the numerous strategic consideration made by London, one of the most vital was the need to control a territory near the Suez Canal (opened in 1869), a fundamental passage to reach India and close enough to oil fields in Mesopotamia¹²⁹. Although the motivations of British government were sincere in supporting the birth of a Jewish national home, supporting the Zionist movement seemed to be the best strategy to follow in order to legitimize British presence in Palestine.

Few days after, in December 1917 when the World War I was about to end, General Sir. Edmund Allenby entered in Jerusalem, opening a new era of Jewish history in Palestine. Indeed, the scope of the declaration was so important because, concretely, it provided the support of Britain for the national revival Zionist project in *Eretz Yisrael*. The Jewish people were considered a nation.

The British influence and control on those areas was officially established at the San Remo Conference in 1920, Britain was granted with the Mandate of Palestine¹³⁰, giving it the responsibility for implementing the Balfour Declaration; the Mandate¹³¹ was then created by the Council of the League of Nations¹³² on July 24th 1922; the fact that London was ready to realized what expressed in the declaration didn't mean that no attempts were made in order to promote the participation of Arab representatives in the Mandate institutions. So, on June 1922, the British Colonial Office

¹²⁸ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Balfour Declaration*, Foreign Policy – Selected Reference Documents, n.1, 2/11/1917.

¹²⁹ Gelvin J.L., *The Israel-Palestine Conflict...* op. cit., p. 82.

¹³⁰ The British mandate for Palestine was a legal permission for the administration of post-Ottoman Palestine. The official document was ratified by the League of Nations in 1922 and became effective in 1923.

¹³¹ A state or territory was taken into "custody" by a mandate power, which administered it legally and politically. But the mandate had a temporary character, in fact, the power that governed had the task of accompanying the people on a path that would lead to national independence.

¹³² It was born by the will of the winners of the World War I, as a result of the shocking experience. It is the first international organization of history and it was created with the precise aim of preventing the outbreak of conflicts.

published a White Paper¹³³ announcing that the Mandate “did not contain or imply anything which need cause alarm to Arab population of Palestine¹³⁴”.

Thanks to the Mandate, Great Britain could thus assert its control over Palestine, inaugurating a period that will be crucial to the formation of the future State of Israel. But, with the time passing by, it was becoming clearer that the international momentum of opportunity that had led to the great achievement of the Balfour Declaration had gone.

1.4.2 The State in the making and Labor supremacy

The British Mandate of Palestine began with a general change in the attitude that the Government of London had regarding the Zionist project. The main reason for this shift was due to the Arab claims about the promises made by London during World War I¹³⁵; this conflict surely changed the landscape which Jews in Europe and Palestine would have to face. First of all, the primary objective of Zionist leadership was changed: promoting immigration in the promised Land was replacing the priority of planning the future of the *Yishuv*.

The World Zionist Organization began to focus its efforts to secure work and housing for immigrants in *Eretz Yisrael*, through political support and funding; in order to be more efficient, it opened one branch also in Palestine, which will be transformed in the Zionist Executive which over time assumed the task to govern the *Yishuv*. But the institution-building process was just begun; in 1920, the *Histadrut* (*HaHistadrut HaKlalit shel HaOvdim B'Eretz Yisrael*, the General Federation of Jewish Workers in the Land of Israel) was founded¹³⁶ and it was composed by two branches: the economic arm, *Hevrat HaOvdim* (Society of Workers, a group of companies, including banks and building enterprise) and by the *Kupat Olim Clalit* (the General Health Service) which provide medical help for all its members¹³⁷.

Mapai's political control within this institution was strong and consolidate thanks to its majority (established through elections) in the representative bodies, this element allowed the party to

¹³³London synthesized the new approach with the promulgation of a White Paper, which declared the need to control Jewish immigration, for Palestine was not to be considered as the Jewish national headquarters but one of the possible places where the Jewish State could have been developed (of course if the “environmental” conditions would have allowed it).

¹³⁴ Shapira A., *Israel...*, op.cit., p.76.

¹³⁵ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro...*, op. cit., pag. 31.

¹³⁶ The process that led to the foundation of this organization is showed in Tzahor Z., *The Histadrut: From Marginal Organization to “State-in-the-Making”*, in Reinhartz Y. and Shapira A., *Essential Papers...*, op. cit., pp. 479-484.

¹³⁷ Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op. cit., pp. 237-240.

exercise a strong influence on the majority of society; in a country with no mechanism of absorption of immigrants, this organization played a leading role in helping newcomers to settle in. Moreover, the relationship between the labor union and its members was based on their fully dependence on the system, internalization of its values and the political backing they gave on return¹³⁸.

Meanwhile the *Yishuv*'s political autonomy was built around *Knesset-Yisrael* (Jewish Assembly), a body encompassing all the Jews of Palestine except for those who did not wish to belong. Its members elected an Assembly of Representatives, which in turn elected a National Committee (*Va'ad Leumi*) from among its number. *Knesset-Yisrael* was split between religious and secular, right and left, moderates and activists, reflecting the Jewish political blocs present in Palestine.

In 1929, according to what was established in the Mandate, the Jewish Agency¹³⁹ was created. It was responsible for the management of Jewish immigration, the purchase of Arab lands and the setting of the Zionist leadership's political agenda in Palestine. In addition, the Agency immediately had the crucial role to regulate the relations between the Jews living in the Mandate territory and the British authority. If, for London was mainly a representative authority, this the institution will become responsible for the formation of an embryonic state, according to the Zionist perspective, promoting the construction of schools and hospitals. Thanks to the Jewish Agency, the *Yishuv* succeeded in pursuing a semi-independent government experiment, which would prove to be fundamental in 1948. On the other hand, the same principle was applied towards the Arab community and, already in 1922, the Mandate authorities approved also the formation of the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC), appointed in order to administrate and to foster the development of Arab political realities. An year later, in 1930, *Mapai* (*Mifleget Po'alei EretzYisrael*, Party of the Land of Israel's Workers) came to life from the fusion between *Ahdut Ha'Avoda*¹⁴⁰ and *HaPo'el HaTza'ir*¹⁴¹ embodying the ideology of socialist Zionism as conceived by David Ben-Gurion¹⁴² (1886-1973). The *Mapai*'s program stated: «A. *Mapai* recognizes that the Labor movement in *Eretz Yisrael* is united in its historic aim: devotion to the establishment of the Jewish people in the land of Israel as a free working people, rooted in all the branches of the agricultural and industrial economy and autonomously developing its own Hebrew culture [...]».

¹³⁸ Isaac R. J., *Party and politics in Israel ...*, op. cit., p.28.

¹³⁹ Founded in 1929 by the 16th World Zionist Congress, it was considered the de facto government of a state under construction.

¹⁴⁰ Zionist Socialist Labor Party in Palestine founded in 1919. It aspired, through organized mass immigration, to mold the life of the Jewish people in *Eretz Yisrael* as a commonwealth of free and equal workers living on its labor, controlling its property, and arranging its distribution of work, its economy, and its culture

¹⁴¹ The entire process of unification is well explained in Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op. cit., pp. 46-56.

¹⁴² His name was David Grün, but he changed it with David Ben-Gurion (the son of the lion) when he arrived in Palestine in 1906 from Poland.

B. *Mapai* considers itself to be responsible for pioneering realization in the Zionist movement [...]. The party participates in the Zionist Organization and its institutions, in the Socialist International, in the *Knesset Yisrael* (and in the institutions of self-government) as the representative of the Jewish workers in Palestine for active and responsible pioneering activity [...] ¹⁴³».

The party will lead the independence struggle and after the establishment of the state, the subsequent government for almost thirty years; Its centrality lied in the ability to direct and control governmental activities as well as organize mass support and participation. From the first years of its existence it faced the nation-building challenge, gaining legitimacy, compliance and loyalty of the population for the new system of government, through a state building process designed to penetrate society, in order to regulate behavior in it and draw a larger amount of resources from it ¹⁴⁴. When Ben-Gurion arrived in Palestine, he was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Borochof and Gordon and by the activity of the movements *Po'alei Tzion* and *Tze'irei Tzion* (then merge into *HaPo'el HaTza'ir* in 1905), which at that time contended the hegemony on socialist Zionist movement in *Eretz Yisrael* ¹⁴⁵. Ben-Gurion's Labor Zionism soon abandoned the values most linked to international socialism for a kind of nationalism that would have focused on nation-building process, making socialist ideology a mere means for realizing the Zionist project. When *Mapai* was founded, it was clear that the objectives of the national struggle had the highest priority on the collectivist project: «The identity of our Zionism and our Socialism does not consist of an objective identity, existing out of ourselves, in Zionism and in Socialism as such, in an abstract sense; [...] From socialism in general, in its abstractness, we can't deduce our activity in *Eretz Yisrael*. [...] Socialist Zionism means integral, full Zionism, completing all the historical content of Israel's national redemption without residues and without conditions, without surrenders and without compromises ¹⁴⁶».

With the right and center movements lacking political consciousness, the left consolidated around an ideology that used socialist imagery; in this way the Labor movement fulfilled the national mission with its organizations and with its values. In particular, the cultural project was very important and in 1925 *Davar*, the daily newspaper of *Histadrut* was published for the first time by Berl Katznelson ¹⁴⁷ (1887-1944), trying also to get the intellectuals involved and to strengthen the special relationship between the Labor movement and the young Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

¹⁴³ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *The Union Conference - speeches and lectures*, Archives of organizations and institutions *Mapai* - Labor Party, 2-021-1930-6, 01/05/1930- 01/07/1930, pp. 97-99.

¹⁴⁴ Medding P. offers a detailed explanation of this dynamic in *Mapai in Israel: political Organization and Government in a New Society*, Cambridge England: University Press, 1972, pp 9-13.

¹⁴⁵ Merhav P., *The Israeli left...*, op. cit., pp. 11-16.

¹⁴⁶ Ben-Gurion D., *L'Operaio nel Sionismo* (1933), in Bidussa D., *Il sionsimo...*, op.cit., p. 188-189.

¹⁴⁷ Berl Katznelson born in Belorussia. He was the son of a member of *Hovevei Zion* and from childhood grew up with dreams of *aliyah*. In addition to his desire to settle in Israel, Katznelson was strongly imbued with the

One of the final aim of Ben-Gurion's vision was to create a "cultured worker"¹⁴⁸, a "new Jew", a model pioneer bearing his hoe and rifle; the *halutz* ethos was powerful, for it presented a young person with a concrete mission whose importance was never in doubt. In this cult, a special place was reserved for those born and brought up in Palestine, the *sabra*¹⁴⁹, the desert cactus gave its name to this generation: its prickly pear has at horny outer skin but sweet and juicy flesh; the *sabras* were said to be direct, honest and brave, free of the hypocritical mannerism of bourgeois society, with strength that lay not in words but in deeds. Thus, did the settlers idealize.

Promoting the pioneer as the ideal type of the Labor movement was part of the multifaceted attempt to shape Hebrew society in Palestine into an alternative to bourgeois society, the seeds of an utopian society were agricultural settlements matched the deal. This culture had its own symbols and clothing fashion highlighted proletarian and collectivist attitudes: the simple blue shirt worn by youth movement members, the young women's *safran* (dress) and long braid, the *Palmach*¹⁵⁰ fighter's khaki shorts, the *kibbutznik's* *temble* hat. The most preferred leisure activity by *kibbutzim* were circle dances, *hora* circles usually danced on *Shabbat* and other Jewish holidays, which provided opportunity for applying religious symbols to the new secular world.

The education system worked to inculcate this ethos and the commitment to the Zionist idea. Schools and youth movements took trips to historic sites such as the graves of the Maccabee in Modi'in, or to Masada and every trip included explanations of the historical events. The text read in these places, the songs sung together, the physical exertion of the walks and the sense of collective belonging helped to foster love of the country and its history. This identification with the physical Land, its climate and its landscapes coalesced to make the children born in Palestine acquire the feeling of being masters of the country.

In this way Ben-Gurion's political and ideological triumph took place; *Mapai* reported a strong majority in the 1931 elections to the Assembly of *Yishuv* Representatives (a kind of parliament). Two years later, on the occasion of the Eighteenth Zionist Congress, he obtained 44% of the votes for the presidency of the WZO; finally, Ben-Gurion was elected president of the Jewish Agency in 1935. In

ideal of physical labor and when he arrived in Israel in 1909, he worked on farms and served on several *Labor* councils. To meet with the health problems of workers, he helped initiate *Kuppat Holim*, the Sick Fund.

¹⁴⁸Shapira A., *Israel...*, op.cit., p 136.

¹⁵⁰ It was *Haganah* striking force, it was established on May 19, 1941, due to fears of a German invasion of Palestine. The force originally consisted of nine assault companies: three in the northern Galilee, two in central Galilee, two in southern Galilee, and one in Jerusalem. The *Palmach* bases were situated on *kibbutzim*, so members of the *Palmach* were responsible for their agricultural tasks as well as their military training exercises. This social framework created by the *Palmach* was considered to be the core of the *Sabra*, or native-born Israeli.

this way, he became the dominant political character of the Zionist movement, internationally, but especially in the Mandate of Palestine.

The use of a strong socialist propaganda by the Labor movement and its predominance created an increase in tensions with right-wing movements until it came to the creation of a deep political rift within the youth leadership.

1.4.3 The struggle for the State and Revisionist Zionism

The 1920 represented a watershed in Arab-Jewish relations, for in that year riots broke out in many cities, even in places where for decades the two communities had lived together. On April 4th while the celebrations for *Nabi Musa*¹⁵¹ and *Pesach* were taking place, a group of Muslim pilgrims coming from Hebron, entered in Jerusalem, shouting for the Arab independence and singing the praises for King Faysal; this as the beginning of series of intense violence against the Jewish inhabitants of the city¹⁵². This episode brought to the exacerbation of the relationships between Arabs and Jews in Palestine and giving proof of the need for the Zionist institution to be provided of a defense force, increasing the importance of the *Haganah* and other military groups as *HaShomer*. Also relevant, in order to understand the effect of these clashes on the Zionist movement, was the episode of Tel Hai, a small settlement north of Galilee and just below the Golan Heights that enters Lebanon, at the border with Syria (the Metulla area). In January of that year, Tel Hai was the only Jewish presence in that area along with two other outposts, contrary to *Yishuv*'s institutions suggestions¹⁵³, settlers decided not to evacuate rather resist, until when the settlement was attacked and all residents were killed in combat. Among these, there was Joseph Trumpeldor¹⁵⁴ who, before dying, would have said these words: «*Ein davar, tov lamut be'aderetzenu*¹⁵⁵» (there is no doubt, it is good to die for our country), becoming the Zionist symbol of the individual will to give his own life for the defense of the nation. Thus, it began the myth of Tel Hai and, with also Masada¹⁵⁶, became an emblem of extreme resistance and patriotic pride.

¹⁵¹ Meaning "Prophet Moses" is the name of a seven-day long religious festival that was celebrated annually by Palestinian Muslims, beginning on the Friday before Good Friday, according to the old Orthodox Greek calendar. The celebration consisted in a collective pilgrimage from Jerusalem to what was understood to be the Tomb of Moses, near Jericho.

¹⁵² In order to read a detailed account of the events, see Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., pp.125-128.

¹⁵³ Caplan N., *Palestine Jewry and the Palestine Question 1917-1935*, Frank Cass, 1978, pp. 49-51.

¹⁵⁴ Former Russian Army official lost an arm in the Russian-Japanese War of 1905.

¹⁵⁵ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p.123.

¹⁵⁶ During the Great Revolt of the Jews against the Romans, a group of 960 Jews found refuge there and stayed there for three years, until the Roman army marched against Masada with the Tenth Legion and 10,000 Jewish slaves. Once it became apparent that the Tenth Legion would soon succeed in breaching the walls, Elazar ben

In addition to becoming a central element of Zionist ethos, Tel Hai episode opened a period of clashes between Jews and Arabs that would take place between 1920 and 1921; in the same years, an important shift took place inside Arab nationalism in Palestine¹⁵⁷: from a broader vision, including Palestine under the rule of a Great Syria, to more local aspirations¹⁵⁸. In this context of growing hostility, the ability to self-defense soon became important; the third *aliyah* (between 1919 and 1923) gave an important contribution to the cause, as it brought into the Land of Israel Jews coming mainly from Eastern Europe, strongly influenced by socialist and Marxist ideas, which will be the future political and military leaders of the Israeli establishment. The great difference between them and the previous masses of Polish and Russian Jews emigrating to Palestine was that they chose to emigrate as a symbol of generational refusal of the Diaspora Jewry, conceived as archaic and submissive. This set of ideals gave rise to a particularly operational and realistic Zionism: it was the movement of the *Halutzim*, the "pioneers": they came to the promised Land, marked above all by the Jewish experience of exiles of inability to self-defense, which thus was becoming an unavoidable requirement in order to create a Jewish State able to protect and to provide security to the Jewish people. For this reason, the *Haganah*¹⁵⁹ born in 1920, whose primary objective was the defense of Jewish settlements from Arab attacks; actually, its structure was not homogeneous, indeed, there were several units in it, which profoundly disagreed with the main guidelines of the organization: moderation and proportionality. So, in 1931 took place the first secession, giving birth to *Irgun Zvai Leumi*¹⁶⁰, representing a more aggressive and offensive approach towards Arab and British targets. Another wave of violence occurred in 1929 when a pogrom in Hebron and the "crisis of the Wailing Wall" occurred. On August 23rd the Jewish community of six hundred people, who for centuries had been living in the city, suffered a series of attacks by Arab fellow citizens. The dead were 64, and though hundreds of Jews were saved from their Arab neighbors, the shock was so strong that the survivors decided to abandon Hebron. This was the end of the secular Jewish presence in that place, which would start again after 1967 when the city became a symbol of the Jewish colonization of the occupied Palestinian Territories.

Yair, the Zealots' leader, decided that all the Jewish defenders (men, women and children) should burn the fortress and commit suicide.

¹⁵⁷ For a detailed study on the Palestinian nationalism see Muslih M., *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, Columbia University Press, 1988.

¹⁵⁸ Marzano A., *Storia...*, op.cit., p. 99.

¹⁵⁹ It was the first paramilitary organization in Israel, created to create an independent military force from the foreign government. It ceased to exist in 1948.

¹⁶⁰ The National Military Organization was born in 1937 with a strong connotation of the right and will join the Revisionist movement by becoming its armed arm.

During the same days, Jewish rallies were taking place in the streets of Tel Aviv and by the *Kotel*¹⁶¹, claiming their rights over Temple Mount; the issues of the Holy places had become in the previous year one of the strongest symbols for Muslims in order to oppose the Zionist's advancement. Rumors spread about the intentions of the Jewish demonstrators to go on *Haram al-Sharif*¹⁶² and the Muslim population was incited to attack the Jews and defend the Holy Places in Jerusalem. The clashes were widespread all over the city and in other different towns; the British authorities tried to take control of the situation but it was hard to handle. After one week of turmoil, thirteen Jews and one hundred and sixteen Arabs died, while three hundred and thirty-nine and two hundred and thirty-two people (respectively) were wounded¹⁶³. The result of those events was an increased exacerbation of the opposing perceptions and the embitterment of the relationships between the two communities¹⁶⁴. While *Haganah* and the Jewish population maintained in general a cautious approach (*havlagah*, self-restraint¹⁶⁵), *Irgun* proved to be ready to react and raise the level of the violence. This attitude was deeply inspired by the ideas of Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky¹⁶⁶ (1880-1940), who had already founded *Betar* Youth Movement (*Brit Trumpeldor*, Trumpeldor's Pact), in 1923. From this point, a growing activism led him to take over the leadership of the dissident *Irgun* military organization¹⁶⁷. One important moment of Jabotinsky's political career was in 1921, when he joined the Zionist Executive 1921 where, from the beginning, he entered in a sharp contrast with Weizmann, being his main opponent for all his life. After few years, Jabotinsky resigned from the Executive, because he thought that the policies (in particular the acceptance of the White Paper of 1922) pursued by the Zionist leadership would have caused the loss of Palestine¹⁶⁸, so in 1925 he seceded and established

¹⁶¹ The *Kotel ha-Ma'aravi* (the Western Wall) is the holiest place in Judaism and it consist in the remains of the Western part of the wall of the ancient complex of the Second Temple.

¹⁶² In Arabic means Noble Sanctuary. This place is identified in both Jewish and Islamic tradition as the area of Mount Moriah where Abraham offered up his son in sacrifice and where Prophet Muhammad's night journey to heaven had started.

Today is the second holiest place for Islam, due to the presence of The Dome of the Rock (*Qubbat al-Sakhra*), a shrine encircling the Holy Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque, a former Byzantine basilica.

¹⁶³ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p.151.

¹⁶⁴ For an in-depth analysis see Simoni M., *At the margins of conflict. Social perspectives on Arabs and Jews in British Palestine 1922-1948*, Venezia, Cafoscarina, vol. 1, 2010.

¹⁶⁵ Codovini G., *Storia del conflitto arabo israeliano palestinese...*, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁶⁶ Born in Odessa, Russia, he worked as a journalist and during World War I persuaded the British to form Jewish volunteer units within the British Army.

¹⁶⁷ Isaac R. J., *Party and politics in Israel ...*, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

¹⁶⁸ Shavit Y., *Fire and Water: Ze'ev Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement*, in Reinharz Y and Shapira A., *Essential Papers...*, op. cit., pp. 548-549.

the Union of Zionists Revisionists (*HaTzohar, Brit HaTzionim HaRevizionistim*) which called for the immediate establishment of a Jewish State¹⁶⁹.

Revisionism reached popular levels of popular support in the Twenties¹⁷⁰ when the Arab clashes and British policies began to create a climate of disillusionment in the *Yishuv*; Jabotinsky used these sentiments to form his own movement and in particular the ideology of Revisionist Zionism.

Basically, the cause of Jabotinsky's controversy with the official Zionist leadership relied in the conception of the Jewish state; he traced two fundamental principles that consisted in: the integrity of *Eretz Yisrael* on both sides of the Jordan river¹⁷¹ and the obtaining of a Jewish sovereignty over the whole area. His vision of Zionism was maximalist and his most emblematic expression of his vision is "The Iron Wall", an article published in 1923 in the Russian magazine *Razsvet*.

His starting point was the acknowledgment of Arab opposition to come to any form of compromise with Zionism, arguing how this attitude was understandable: «Every native population will resist to foreign colonists as long as there is hope of being able to free themselves from the danger of foreign settlements. This will be the behavior of the Arabs until they have a glimmer of hope to be able to prevent Palestine becoming the Land of Israel ¹⁷²».

For this reason, it was useless to have false illusions that, in the end, the compromise with the Arabs would come because of their satisfaction thanks to the economic progress and wealth brought by the Jewish presence. There was no possibility that the local population would have spontaneously accepted the aims of the Zionist project¹⁷³.

The real question was whether it was possible to reach peaceful ends with peaceful means; the possibility of coming to a non-violent situation would have depended on the attitude of the Arabs towards Zionism and considering the type of the relations that were being established between the two communities, Jabotinsky felt that a voluntary agreement with the Arab side would have been impossible to achieve.

Starting from this assumption, Jabotinsky argued, therefore, that the only approach to keep with the Arab question was to build an iron wall of Jewish military power, with this concept, he did not intend to say that there was absolutely no possibility to reach an agreement with the Arab neighbors, but that such a conclusion couldn't be achieved in that historical moment, rather that it would have

¹⁶⁹ Shindler C., *Israel, Likud and the Zionist dream: power, politics and ideology from Begin to Netanyahu*, I.B. Tauris, 1995, p.11.

¹⁷⁰ The Revisionist movement went to have four delegates in the Fourteenth Zionist Congress in 1925, to a quarter of the delegates in 1931 when Weizmann lost the presidency and was replaced by Nahum Sokolow.

¹⁷¹ He firmly opposed the decision of Winston Churchill of 1921 (then secretary of state for the colonies) to give rise to the Trans-Jordanian, removing Palestine from Jordan's left bank.

¹⁷² Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro...*, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁷³ The transformation of Arab land in a state with Jewish majority.

been attainable in the long-term. The iron wall was a temporary tool suitable for exhausting Arab hopes regarding Zionist defeat and persuading Arab nationalists to be more incline towards compromise.

Moderate Zionists criticized these positions and Jabotinsky replied with a second article titled “The morality of the iron wall” (1923, *Razsvet*), in which he simply by affirmed the existence of two possibilities: Zionism was a positive phenomenon or a negative one. This question, however, required an answer before deciding to become Zionists¹⁷⁴. Moreover, accusing the iron wall-method of being immoral, for it aimed at the development of Jewish settlements in Palestine against the will of local populations, was contradictory, because the logical consequence would have been the total surrender of the project of rebuilding the Jewish national home. The unpopularity of the message transmitted by Jabotinsky (the majority of *Yishuv*'s population preferred to consider the Arab question as secondary or in any case easily resolvable) made impossible for the revisionists to concretely defy the supremacy of Labor Zionism.

1.5 Towards the establishment of the State

David Ben-Gurion was a pragmatic politician and what distinguished his approach towards the Arab question was, first of all, an inflexible realism. His fears increased when he realized that the Arab opposition was based on a matter of principle and consisted of a strong rejection of Zionist envision; for sure, he was one of the first Zionist leaders to understand the national character of Arab revolts, though he felt that the establishment of a national home in Palestine did not have the same meaning for Jews and Arabs. While the latter had potentially many other nations in which they could live as an independent people, for the Jewish people it was the only place to establish their own nation¹⁷⁵. So, he, like Jabotinsky, came somehow to consider the conflict with the Arabs as inevitable, but the big difference between them was that the Labor leader considered cooperation with the British indispensable for Zionist success.

However, the clash between Jews and Arabs would have become even more radical in the mid-1930s, following the great flow of immigrants¹⁷⁶ who came to Palestine between 1933 and 1936¹⁷⁷. Indeed, in 1936, the Great Arab Revolt took place, which consisted of a series of strikes and a widespread

¹⁷⁴ Jabotinsky V., *The Iron Wall*, *Rassivet*, November 11th 1923.

¹⁷⁵ Kaplan J., *The Zionist movement*, vol. I, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Rothberg School for Overseas Students, 1983, p. 330.

¹⁷⁶ About 164,000 people arrived in Palestine following the spread of Nazi persecution in Europe.

¹⁷⁷ The local population understood that *Yishuv*'s expansion would have ended up reducing them in their own land, for this reason.

campaign of civil disobedience against Zionism: the *mufti* of Jerusalem¹⁷⁸ invoked Arab Laborers to join a general strike (lasted about six months) to protest against Zionist immigration; while the time passing by, it turned into an uprising against Jewish settlements and an uprising against the British administration¹⁷⁹. After a wave of random violence against Jewish presence, the Arab Higher Committee¹⁸⁰ took command and made political demands: cessation of immigration and land sales and representational government that would place power on the hands of Arab majority¹⁸¹.

Following the Arab revolt, the Royal Commission of Enquiry, called the Peel Commission, was sent to Palestine in order «to ascertain the causes of the disorders and whether both Arabs and Jews had legitimate reasons for discontent and to advise on their removal¹⁸²». The Commissioner found that the two national groups had nothing at all in common and that they were entangled in a bitter conflict over the right of ownership. The conclusion was that, in order to satisfy both sides, a partition of the country had to take place, in order to establish two independent states, Jewish and Arab. According to this plan, the Jews would have gained some 5,000 square kilometers, including a large part of Galilee, Jezreel valley, the Mediterranean coast to the present Ashdod. The Arabs would have had the Negev, the coastal plain of Ashdod, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. This territory would be joined to the Trans-Jordanian to form a single Arab state; Bethlehem, Jerusalem and the Ramla corridor to Jaffa, would remain an enclave under British control to protect the holy places¹⁸³. Moreover a population exchange¹⁸⁴ will be realized between Jewish residents in Arab territory and Arab inhabitants inside Jewish areas, in order to avoid problems of coexistence¹⁸⁵.

The proposal raised bitter dispute among Zionists ranks¹⁸⁶; on one side, the supporters of the partition, led by David Ben-Gurion¹⁸⁷, who saw the British proposal as a starting point for future

¹⁷⁸ Mohammad Amin al-Husayni was the *mufti* of Jerusalem. This figure was the supreme Sunni Islamic legal authority responsible for the proper management of the Islamic holy sites of Jerusalem.

¹⁷⁹ It started in the wake of riots that took place in 1936 and 1939, called The Great Uprising, ending the Arab hostile period called The Riots.

¹⁸⁰ During 1936 Great Revolt the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), a loose coalition of recently formed Arab political parties, was created in order to manage the protest.

¹⁸¹ Shapira A., *Israel...*, op.cit., p. 84.

¹⁸² Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p. 179.

¹⁸³ The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: an Interactive Database (BETA), *Peel Commission Report -1937*, p.,383-384, (<http://database.ecf.org.il>).

¹⁸⁴ This move would involve 225.00 Arabs and 1,250 Jews and would provide compensation for all those who would be moving.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 389-390.

¹⁸⁶ The Arab group guided by Hajj al-Amin was against this proposal too.

¹⁸⁷ He is one of the nation's fathers, an exponent of Zionist socialism, and is considered the founder of the Israeli Labor Party, having created *Mapai*.

negotiations, which allowed at the same time to fulfill the task assumed by the World Zionist Organization: to bring about the birth of the State of Israel¹⁸⁸.

On the other one, for the opponents, made by Jabotinsky's revisionist group, accepting this division would have meant giving up the vision of the historical Land of Israel¹⁸⁹: the myth stood in opposition to the partitioned state¹⁹⁰. Moreover, there was also another group of opponents who based their objections not on history but on the rational argument that the partitioned Jewish state would be unable to sustain itself and to absorb the masses of immigrants. So, at the Twentieth Zionist Congress in 1937, a large majority joined the ranks around a resolution allowing the Zionist Executive entering in the negotiations based on the partition plan. Conversely, the High Arab Committee¹⁹¹ rejected the partition and in 1937 the clashes resumed.

British policy was now guided by the need to ensure peace and quiet in the Middle East because appeasing Arab populations was part of Britain's preparation for the approaching conflict in Europe: «We are forced to assess the Palestinian problem, especially from the point of view of its effects on the international situation [...] If we really have to hurt somebody, better the Jews than the Arabs¹⁹²». London put into effect its new attitude with the publication of Malcom Mc Donald White Paper in 1939, which stated that immigration would be limited to 75.000 over a period of five years and that any further immigration would be conditional up to Arab consent. Palestine would become an independent state (with Arab majority) after a ten-year transitional period¹⁹³. Land sales in most regions of the Mandate were restricted.

The outbreak of World War II in September 1939 changed the *Yishuv*'s priorities; the struggle against the White Paper was replaced by fear of war. Ben-Gurion coined a slogan «We shall fight the war against the Hitler as if there was no White Paper and we shall fight the White Paper as if there were no war¹⁹⁴» expressed the Zionist dilemma. In the end the struggle against the White Paper¹⁹⁵ was

¹⁸⁸ Hertzberg A., *The Zionist idea...*, op. cit., p. 587.

¹⁸⁹ Israel State Archive, *Palestine Royal Commission - Evidence Submitted by Jabotinsky*, (ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-pubBritishMandate-000tynl, Jerusalem, 1/2/1937-31/1/1946).

¹⁹⁰ Isaac R. J., *Israel Divided...*, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁹¹ It was created by the Grand mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husayni in 1936 in order to join the effort of the whole Palestinian community during the 1936 Arab revolt.

¹⁹² Neville Chamberlain, in Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p.203

¹⁹³ It also introduced the "*certificatim*" system, legal immigration documents granted to a number of people decide by London, which effectively curtailed Jewish immigration

¹⁹⁴ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Minutes from Meetings* (Heb.), Archives of Organizations and Institutions *Mapai* - Labor Party, 2-023-1939-28, 09/11/1939-12/12/1939, pp. 92-114.

¹⁹⁵ Despite the fact that it had been a convergence of efforts between Zionist leadership and British army in order to fight against the Nazi invasion of Northern Africa in 1940, the Zionist efforts were also concentrated

shelved until better times¹⁹⁶ and the *Yishuv* enlisted itself in the war effort by placing at Britain's disposal its production capacity, human resources and military potential of 25.000 - 28.000 soldiers¹⁹⁷.

Meanwhile the news that about the Holocaust tragedy arrived to the Zionist leadership, becoming a new moral motivation for the establishment of a dwelling place for the Jewish people in Palestine; a much more inflexible type of Zionism developed during World War II and the commitment to state became even more desperate in the shadow of the *Shoah*. Thus in 1942 at the Hotel Biltmore in New York, an extraordinary Zionist meeting with the presence of some members of the Jewish Agency gave birth to the Biltmore Program, which was the first explicit declaration made by the Zionist movement about the will to create a sovereign, independent socialist Jewish state, where the ingathering of the exiles could be realized¹⁹⁸.

Immediately after the end of the war, the Jewish Agency's executive asked the British government to declare Palestine a Jewish state, in line with what the Biltmore Program, but the British government didn't want to grant Zionist's requests: London became the unique obstacle on the road towards independence. Between 1945 and 1948 Zionist leadership fought with all its energies to achieve the creation of the Jewish state; Ben- Gurion was the example of the "Zionist warrior", assuming total control of the institutions and, contrasting with Weizmann's opinion, he decided to start an open opposition campaign against British rule, launching an armed struggle: the Hebrew revolt, avoided in the previous years, was about to explode.

Jews that were enlisted in the British Army had been trained and had acquired some familiarity with weapons and combat strategies; with the help of Great Britain, the *Palmach* (*Plugot Mahatz*, striking force), a special department of the *Haganah*, was founded. The latter had the task to coordinate its action with paramilitary groups created by the revisionist movement: *Irgun* and *Lehi*¹⁹⁹ (*Lohamei Herut Yisrael*, Israel's Freedom Fighters). Although these two organizations were much more intransigent regarding the relationship with London, the three movements united in the Movement of Jewish Revolt²⁰⁰ (*Tnuat Hamerit Ha'ivri*), which began to pursue an anti-British strategy by hitting sensitive targets. There was a real escalation, which even led to the assassination of an English official and to

on the *Aliyah Beth* project. It was conceived in order to allow Jewish immigrants and refugees to arrive in Palestine clandestinely. *Aliyah Beth* made it possible to enter 12.000 people in the country.

¹⁹⁶ Even the Revisionist activists decided to offer a truce, after their offensive against the British in the following of the 1939 White Paper.

¹⁹⁷ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p. 213.

¹⁹⁸ The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: an Interactive Database (BETA), *Biltmore Conference-1942*, (<http://database.ecf.org.il>).

¹⁹⁹ A clandestine organization led by Avraham Stern, from which he took the name "Stern Gang".

²⁰⁰ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro...*, op. cit., p. 48.

the terror attack (ninety-one victims) at King David Hotel, headquarter of the British Mandate, perpetrated by the far more extreme *Irgun* and Stern Gang.

On February 14th 1947, the British government, unable to handle the situation and in the wake of a wider reorganization of its colonial system, decided to withdraw and end the Mandate in Palestine, leaving the newborn United Nations Organization the task to find a solution; the General Assembly appointed an *ad hoc* committee: United Nations Special Committee for Palestine (UNSCOP). The committee spent five weeks in the territories of the British Mandate listening to Jewish and British officials, visiting the country, and meeting populations. The members found a general difference in the way they were welcomed by Jewish communities, compared to Arab distrust and generally they found the areas under *Yishuv*'s control more developed than the Arab villages characterized by underdevelopment. The Jewish community was judged "a state in the making".

The Partition Plan, contained in Resolution 181, was voted by the General Assembly on November 28th 1947. The vote was broadcast via radio around the world: the votes were 33 in favor, 13 against and 10 abstained, endorsing the partition of Palestine; Arab representatives left the room, incapable to understand how 37% of the population would have obtained 55% of the territory and stated that any attempt to enforce the Resolution would trigger a war.

Meanwhile, all Jews in the *Yishuv* were glued to their radios and when the result was announced, they flooded in the streets, taken by a feeling of spiritual elation; only Ben-Gurion did not take part to the celebration, aware of the bloody toll the establishment of the Jewish State would exact: «I couldn't dance that night. I looked at the other people dancing in happiness and I couldn't avoid to think that war was already there waiting for them²⁰¹».

1.5.1 Ben-Gurion and the last and the Declaration of Independence

The situation rapidly deteriorated after the vote of the General Assembly; on November 30, the Arab guerrillas launched military attacks against Jewish targets; the war broke out immediately. The first Arab-Israeli war started as a "civil war" in November 1947, between the *Yishuv* and the Palestinian-Arab community and, in May 1948, it was transformed into a conventional war involving the newborn State of Israel and other Arab countries (mainly Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq), united under the direction of the Arab League²⁰². The Civil War, although presenting moments of

²⁰¹ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p.243.

²⁰² An international institution, the Arab League (officially the League of Arab States) was founded in Cairo on 22 March 1945. At its creation the Arab League comprised Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. The Arab League proposed strengthening ties between Arab states and coordinating regional economic and military policy, while refraining from intervening in any conflict between league members.

considerable difficulty for the *Haganah*. The historical reconstruction of these events is not going to be showed in these paragraphs because it is not the aim of this analysis and because a thoroughly detailed literature already exists, which is able to explain the entire sequence of historical occurrences; anyway it is useful for our research to know that this first phase of the war ended with the victory of the Jewish military forces and their conquest of important areas that had been assigned by the UN Resolution under Palestinian or international control. During the operations, some dramatic events took place, giving birth to the Palestinian refugees' problem: hundreds of thousands of Arabs fled or were forced to leave from their homes.

The unexpected military success gave the strength and the security needed to Ben-Gurion in order to make the conclusion of the British Mandate to coincide with the proclamation of the State of Israel. Thus, on May 14, 1948, at the Modern Art Museum of Tel Aviv, on May 14th (5 of *Iyar* according to the Jewish calendar), the *Hatikva*, the hymn of the future Jewish state was sung and David Ben-Gurion read the Declaration of Independence in front the members of the *Moetzet Ha'am* (People's Council).

The text of the Declaration of Independence stated: «[...] On the day when the British mandate ends, and (in virtue of) the natural and historical right of the Jewish people in accordance with the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, we proclaim the creation of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel land, which will be named *Medinat Yisrael*²⁰³. Zionism had come to accomplish its highest goal, the State of Israel was born, which would forever change the path of the Jewish history. However, Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary: «All the Country is celebrating, joy is profound - and once again I am the only one sad among so many cheerful people, like on November 29th 1947²⁰⁴»; the threat was the imminent invasion by the Arab states, which would have forced the young state to fight the first war of its history. A few days earlier, the *Haganah* leaders had told Ben-Gurion that, along with their opinion, the chances of success were around 50%²⁰⁵.

«Recently our main and only concern was to defend the *Yishuv* from the Palestinian Arabs [...] but now we are facing a completely different situation. The Land of Israel land is surrounded by independent Arab states [...] There is a danger: an attack towards the *Yishuv* by neighboring states with their regular armies, with the extent to destroy it²⁰⁶», so Ben-Gurion transformed *Haganah* into Israeli official army, *Tsahal* (acronym *Tzva Hahagana le Yisrael*, *Israel Defense Forces*)).

²⁰³ The Knesset, *The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel*, Official Gazette. n. 1; 5 *Iyar* 5708, 14-05-1948, p. 1 (www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat_eng.htm).

²⁰⁴ Ben-Gurion, *The War of Independence: Ben-Gurion's Diary*, edited by Rivlin G. and Orren E., Israel Ministry of Defense Edition, 1982, vol.2, p. 416 as reported in

²⁰⁵ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro...*, op. cit., p. 58.

²⁰⁶ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p. 241.

Thus, on May 15th 1948, the regular armies of six Arab states invaded the territory of the newborn Jewish state; Israel was created in the midst of a war and its first goal in foreign policy was survival. Indeed, the purpose of the Arab League was to defeat the new-born state and eliminate its presence²⁰⁷. Of course, we have to underlying the difference between the rhetoric of politics and the real objectives of the military campaign²⁰⁸

The contrast between the two factions was very tough; the Arab armies enjoyed numeric advantage and a large supply of weapons, but they faced a Zionist movement motivated and resolute more than ever: the Holocaust had shown that Jews could count only on their own forces in order to survive and that an eventual military defeat would have meant another bloodbath of the Jewish people. With the wound of the *Shoah* still open, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) fighters had the motivation and the spirit of sacrifice needed, while the rival soldiers were far less motivated because they weren't fighting for their causes, but fought for the homes and the families of someone else²⁰⁹.

After the conflict, some elements that characterized it would have influenced the collective imagination (on both sides), having important political consequences²¹⁰; the first Arab-Israeli war ended with a stunning Israeli victory and a humiliating Arab defeat. Paying a heavy toll in terms of human lives, the Israelis were able to defend the new state and extend its borders. The state of Israel was a fact and modifying it would be a hard, if not impossible, enterprise: «the State was presenting [...] as a miraculous and revolutionary phenomenon²¹¹».

1.5.2 The First Arab-Israeli War: the birth of a narrative

The aim of this paragraph is not to present an historical close examination of the complex events that led to the birth of the Palestinians refugee problem, nor to provide a complete framework of the cultural debate developed around the different versions and opinions formulated by Israeli and Palestinian historians. This choice was made for several reasons: first of all, because there is

²⁰⁷ Codovini G., *Storia del conflitto arabo israeliano palestinese. Tra dialoghi di pace e monologhi di guerra*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 2007, p. 24.

²⁰⁸ For an in depth- study regarding this issue, see Eppel M., *The Arab States and the 1948 War in Palestine: The Socio-Political Struggles, the Compelling Nationalist Discourse and the Regional Context of Involvement*, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 48, N. 1, 2012, pp. 1-31.

²⁰⁹ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p.60.

²¹⁰ The Israelis were forced to abandon the Jewish part of East Jerusalem, whose synagogues and cemeteries were destroyed; The Israeli parliament was, however, located in West Jerusalem, considered the only state capital. The Trans-Jordanian region expanded to occupy the entire western part of the Jordan, or the West Bank, and on December 16, 1946, King Jordan Abdallah annotated this area (against the Arab League's opinion) and gave the name of Jordan the Hashemite.

²¹¹ Segre V.D., *Il Poligono Mediorientale, Fine della questione arabo-israeliana?*, Il Mulino, 1994, pp.119-120.

already a complete and developed literature about this issue, written and analyzed by outstanding scholars and, secondly, because the analysis of the events that took place in 1948-1949 has to be functional to this study, which would like to understand how these dramatic events have influenced the formation of Israeli national narrative.

One of the consequence of the first Arab-Israeli conflict was the expulsion of 600,000 Jews were expelled from the Arab states involved in the conflict and the exodus of 650,000 Palestinians from the territories allocated to the Jewish state according to the Partition Plan; the problem of Palestinian refugees was officially born²¹². After this mass transfer, inside the territory of the Jewish state²¹³, according to the boundaries of the armistices²¹⁴, there were left only 150,000 Arabs: about 100,000 had found shelter in Lebanon, another 100,000 in Syria, 200,000 in the Gaza Strip occupied by Egypt and 350,000 in West Bank²¹⁵, for a total of four hundred and eighteen villages destroyed²¹⁶. Looking at this numbers we understand why Palestinians refer to this war using the term *Nakba*, the disaster²¹⁷.

The numerical data regarding the refugees is one of the main points of controversy²¹⁸. Israeli institutions officially declare 800,000²¹⁹ exiles, while Palestinians estimate a number ranging from 900,000 to 1,000,000 people. Besides of the debate regarding the data describing the scope of this phenomenon, there is also an harsh opposition about the different interpretations of the dynamics and the causes that produced this exodus: if the traditional Israeli historiographic version (for example, supported by Efraim Karsh or Shabtai Teveth) claims that the Palestinians voluntarily left the place of residence motivated by their leaders to flee in order to allow the Arab League armies to fight more effectively, the opposite narrative (mainly Palestinian but also confirmed by some Israeli

²¹² Codovini G., *Storia del conflitto arabo israeliano palestinese...*, op. cit., p. 26.

²¹³ Israel State Archives, *The State of Israel - War Map*, *מפת מלחמה - מדינת ישראל*, ISA-Collections-Maps-000g5cn, 1/01/1949 - 31/12/1949.

²¹⁴ Israel State Archives, *Intelligence Services - Armistice Agreements*, *שירותי המודיעין - הסכמי שביתות הנשק*, ISA-PMO-PublicDiplomacyMedia-0009lc3, 1/1/1949- 31/12/1952,

²¹⁵ The 1949 Armistice Agreements are a groups of armistice accords signed in that same year between Israel and the main Arab countries involved in the war (Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria). The boundaries established are also known the Green Line.

²¹⁶ This historical reconstruction was proposed, in particular, by Khalidi W. in his volume *All That Remains. The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.

²¹⁷ Kadish A., *Myths and Historiography of the 1948 Palestine war revisited: the case of Lydda*, Middle East Journal, vol.4, n.59, 2005, pp. 617-634.

²¹⁸ Depending on the historical reading provided, several authors propose various data: Efraim Karsh 600,000, while Pappe (known for his harsh criticism of Israel) 750,000.

²¹⁹ Reported by Walter Eytan, General Director of Israel Foreign Ministry, in Marzano A., *Storia dei...*, op. cit., p.124.

scholars like Ilan Pappé²²⁰) claims that the Zionist leadership conducted a premeditated operation of ethnic cleansing, through the adoption of the *Dalet Plan*²²¹.

In order to fulfil the aims of this research, an explanation of the historical events is therefore required; for this reason, a selection among the different historical interpretations had to be made. In this case the reconstruction of the events showed by Benny Morris²²² will be adopted as the main framework of reference for our analysis. This choice has been made, taking into consideration the fact that Morris is an Israeli scholar (allowing to keep a point of view from inside the Israeli narrative) but, who is representative of the “New Historians”, a group of researchers who questioned some of the founding myths of the state interpreted from Zionist rhetoric²²³.

According to his research, the problem of refugees resulted in a number of causes, the most significant are: the escape of Palestinian leadership and middle-class, the violence of Israeli military operations, the widespread panic among Palestinian population and the massacres accomplished by extremist Jewish military forces²²⁴. This explanation could emerge only after the opening of the Israeli archives in the mid-1980s; the study of this documentation has made it possible to provide a structured alternative to the other two rival interpretations since, according to Morris, neither of them show exhaustively the reality of the events²²⁵. For this reason, the birth of the Palestinian refugees should be read as the result of a set of overlapping variables, including: the structural weakness of Palestinian society and the propensity of leaders of *Yishuv* to the idea of the transfer of at least part of the Arabs present inside Israeli territory²²⁶.

There were several phases that led to the Arab abandonment of their villages and cities: in a moment preceding the invasion of the Arab coalition, the spontaneous escape of Palestinian middle-class occurred but, even if this moving away was considered as something temporary in their minds, it implied the closure of schools, hospitals, businesses and services, creating chaos and

²²⁰ Among his works, Pappé I., *The 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestine*, One World Publications, 2006, *The Modern History Palestine, One Land, Two Peoples. 2nd Edition*, Cambridge University Press, 2006. and *The Israel/Palestine Question, 2nd Edition*, Routledge, 2006.

²²¹ The objective of this plan was to gain control of the Jewish areas attributed by the UN divisions to the future state of Israel and to create a solid and continuous basis for Jewish sovereignty.

²²² His major work, dedicated to this issue is: Morris B., *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

²²³ Caplan N., *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories*, John Wiley & Sons, 2011, pp. 232-233.

²²⁴ The best known was the massacre of Derir Yassin (April 9, 1948) completed by *Lehi* and condemned by the *Haganah*, in which about 110 people died. For further detailed studies, Pappé I., *La pulizia etnica della Palestina*, Fazi Editore, 2008, pp.112-159.

²²⁵ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p. 320.

²²⁶ Shavit A., *Interview with Benny Morris: Survival of the fittest*, *Ha'aretz*, January 8th 2004.

impoverishment. In this way Arab-Israeli hostilities were only an aspect of the Palestinian collapse; this was in fact the background in which, in a second phase, mass breakaways were caused by Israeli military operations: the army attacks and the fear they provoked were another main reason for this exodus. There was even an "escape psychosis" caused by the reports about the massacres and reprisals that were accomplished by the most aggressive and extremist elements of Jewish paramilitary organizations. But in the last phase of the war, updates regarding the difficult conditions of the refugees, instilled the firm will to stay in the Palestinians, putting an end to the spontaneous evacuations.

The IDF strategic plans, in particular the *Dalet* Plan, directly contributed to the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem, even though these operations were not politically directed to the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs and when the evacuation of villages were forced by the soldiers, they were determined by «a peculiarity of factors and a complexity of the situation, which does not, however, make the Israelis innocent²²⁷». The real intentions of the *Dalet* Plan have been widely discussed, without coming to a satisfactory conclusion, fixing to very different opinions about its nature: on the one hand it could be understood as a simple tactical and military plan, on the other hand²²⁸ it is seen as a true "expulsion strategy".

In spite of everything, we can't talk about a systematic transfer policy (which was never even discussed by leadership of the newborn state), but rather we have to consider the cumulative effect of the factors shown before, which caused the Palestinian population's exodus²²⁹.

The traditional Zionist version depicts the war of 1948 as a struggle between the powerful Arab opponent and the tiny Israel, an unprecedented struggle between Jewish David and Arab Goliath, in which the former fought in a heroic and desperate battle for survival, which claimed the life of 6,000 Israelis²³⁰ (1% of the population of the time²³¹). This version of the Independence War was fundamental to the nation-building process in Israel. This interpretation of what happened in 1948

²²⁷ Codovini G., *Storia del conflitto arabo israeliano palestinese...*, op. cit., p. 186.

²²⁸ The attempt to de-structure Israeli narratives regarding the state's foundation period is the instrument by which Palestinian historians have sought to bring attention to the expulsion of refugees. The scholar Walid Khalib not only anticipated the thesis of the new historians, but also inaugurated the argument for which the Israelis set up a policy of conquest and expulsion during the Independence War.

²²⁹ Bidussa D., *La nuova storiografia israeliana. Note di lettura*, La Rassegna mensile d'Israel, vol.65, n.2, May-August 1999, p.84.

²³⁰ Israel State Archive, *War Casualties*, מפגעי מלח, ISA-ReligiousAffairs-ReligiousAffairs-0004r6,1/07/1948-30/11/1951.

²³¹ Shapira A., *Israel...*, op.cit., p. 158

is a «popular and moralistic version [...] still taught in schools in Israel. This is a first example of the use of a nationalist interpretation of history in the national building process²³²».

Israeli civil religion²³³ was born from the creation of a narrative told in order to consecrate different historical events, producing a political contract in order to bolster the creation of a nation and to spread, among Israelis, the feeling to belong to the same history: the 1948 war is included in this symbolic set of founding myths.

In this process, however, the different opinions are emerged: the “new historians” are Israeli scholars that, thanks to the opening of the Israeli archives (which took place in the 1980s), researches and surveys and testimonies have reconsidered the knots of Israeli civil religion and its set of myths (especially that of the foundation of the state²³⁴). These historians began to demolish the official Zionist rhetoric, according to which the Palestinians fled spontaneously; due to this historical interpretation, they accuse Israel speaking about “original sin²³⁵”. The aim of the new historiography is to de-construct Israeli identity standards, composed by symbols, icons, places and dates to show how it is the result of an artificial political construction, characterized by the invention of a tradition.

Criticism towards Zionist narrative is not peacefully accepted, since for a state seeking legitimacy since its birth, such reproach has tremendous consequences; for the sake of this analysis, it is interesting to examine how the dramatic 1948 events have influenced the Israeli cultural process. The foundation of the state was a moment of great importance for the development of the Israeli civil religion which, through the canonization of the events, produced a political pact, bonding the nation and legitimizing the state in which Zionism achieved its highest fulfillment. In this context, it is understandable why the “new historians” are also referred to as “post-Zionists” because, by contrast, the Zionist character of State is secondary for them, while it is even more important to stress another of the Zionist aims, that was: normalization²³⁶. Herzl’s movement proposed to solve the “Jewish problem” through the creation of a Jewish State because, first of all, it would have

²³² Shlaim A. in Codovini G., *Geopolitica del conflitto arabo israeliano palestinese. Spazi, fattori e culture*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 2009, p. 252.

²³³ A set of believes, similar to a traditional religion (in the sense that it organizes a system of meanings through a chain of related symbols) but also has its central nucleus placed in an entity rather than in a supernatural power. His goal is to sanctify the society to which it belonged.

²³⁴ Starting from the delicate issue of Palestinian refugees, to the relationship between the *Shoah* and the constitution of the Jewish state; from the nature of the conflicts of 1967 and 1982, to the Israeli responsibilities of the missed peace agreements.

²³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 245.

²³⁶ Liebman C. S. and Don-Yehiya E., *Civil religion in Israel*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, p. 26.

allowed the Jews, viewed as different and irreconcilable elements with the majority of the population, to be considered as a nation among the family of nations, like anyone else²³⁷.

Ben-Gurion had another project in his mind: the creation of a cultural paradigm in order to unify society on the basis of a common identity expressed by a powerful civil religion. The “sanctification” of Israeli State would have provided the ideological strength needed in order to accomplish the nation-building process that was about to start.

²³⁷ Barnavi E., *Storia di Israele dalla nascita dello stato all'assassinio di Rabin*, Bompiani, Milano, 2001, p.237.

Chapter 2. IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL APOGEE OF MAPAI, YEARS OF CONSOLIDATION (1948-1973)

With the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Labor elite (in particular *Mapai*²³⁸) was considered the winner, as the national project was finally realized. For this reason, the party that represented the founders of the State benefited from a long period of great and unbeaten electoral support, mainly due to a high degree of institutional penetration and almost complete ideological domination. The presence of *Mapai* in all the major aspects of Israelis' lives through the *Histadrut*, along with the constant threat of conflict with the Arab neighbors, made it possible to merge the ideological objectives of the party with what was perceived as the national interest²³⁹. The party's success became so closely related to that of the state that political opposition was almost seen as an attack against the country itself.

A fundamental part of the nation-building program envisaged by the Labor leadership included *Mapai*'s ideological shift from socialism to nationalism, or according to Ben-Gurion's version, to statism or *mamlachtiut*. In this chapter we will see how the party, from the apogee of its political and ideological dominance, found itself, before the Yom Kippur War broke out, in a position of weakness and increasing loss of influence. The abandonment of the ideological principles that characterized the period of the struggle for the foundation of Israel, together with the occurrence of significant historical events and profound changes of Israeli society, will lead to the slow decline of Labor-based hegemony that will end with the electoral defeat in 1977 and the birth of a new ideological and political power: the *Likud*.

2.1 Ben-Gurion's national project

Although the creation of the State had been accomplished, a lot of work still had to be done in order to make Israel a strong and a safe country, able to welcome the waves of immigration which were pouring into its borders. Ben-Gurion had clear in his mind the path which had to be taken. According to his opinion, the "Jewish revolution"²⁴⁰ was much more difficult than the other revolutions of history, as it was not only directed against the system, but it had even to create a new one; the Jewish people had to become masters of their own destiny and it could be realized through a creative process that represented the antithesis of the Galut.

²³⁸ *Mapai* (*Mifletet Poalei Eretz Yisrael*—The Workers Party of the Land of Israel) was established in 1930 as a result of the union of two parties: *Ahdut Ha'Avoda* and *HaPo'el HaTza'ir*. Throughout its existence, *Mapai* was the largest, strongest and most dominant party on the political scene. See, chapter 1, page 27.

²³⁹ Lockery N., *The Israeli Labor Party in the shadow of the Likud*, Ithaca Press, 2007, p. 10.

²⁴⁰ Herzberg A., *The Zionist idea...*, op. cit., p. 609.

The latter symbolized the material, political, spiritual, and cultural dependence, while the Zionist task was to break radically with this dependency, creating with its own efforts the necessary conditions for a future as an independent and free people. This was the core of this revolutionary thought. «[...] The conquest of Labor and land, self-defense, the development of the Hebrew language and its culture, freedom for the individuals, cooperation and social responsibility, preparation for further immigrants and the merger of the various Diaspora in one single Nation [...]»²⁴¹. According to the vision of the leader these were the means by which the State would have been built. In particular, he emphasized the role of a strong political culture, the task of absorbing new immigrants and maintaining the security status-quo, needed for Israel's survival²⁴².

2.1.1 The creative cultural project: civil religion and *mamlachtiut*

David Ben-Gurion saw the challenge of cultural creativity as an integral part of the national project, which was to be able to incorporate the event of the foundation of the State into Jewish historical tradition. So, various cultural activities began to be institutionalized, whose aim was to revive Jewish culture and to “popularize²⁴³” its traditions. For example, in establishing Israel's official calendar, all major Jewish holydays were included, such as *Sukkot*²⁴⁴, *Yom Kippur*²⁴⁵ and *Pesach*²⁴⁶; while *Shabbat* was established as the weekly official rest day (although every religion is allowed to observe its own). There were other events alongside them that were meant to underline a more national and secular character of the Israeli collective identity, just think about the Independence Day (*Yom HaTzmaut*) and the Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers of Israel and Victims of Terrorism (*Yom Hazikaron l'Chalalei Ma'arachot Yisrael ul'Nifge'ei Pe'ulot Ha'eivah*). All these moments are part of a narrative that creates a kind of “landscape of memory²⁴⁷”, which gives a social character to the national myth and to commemoration, facilitating the citizens to confer them an emotional relevance.

²⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 613.

²⁴² Gorny Y., *The “Melting Pot” in Zionist Thought*, Israel Studies, vol. 6, n. 3, Autumn 2001.

²⁴³ Eisenstadt S., *Israeli Society*, New York, Basic Books, 1967, p., 369.

²⁴⁴ It is the Feast of Tabernacles and remembers the life of the People of Israel in the desert on their journey to the Promised Land.

²⁴⁵ On this occasion is celebrated the Day of Atonement, which is the most sacred day for the Jewish religion. In this recurrence all the sins are expiated.

²⁴⁶ Every Saturday, more precisely from Friday's sunset to Saturday's sunset, the entire day is dedicated to rest and working activities are forbidden.

²⁴⁷ Bilu Y. and Witztum E., *War-Related Loss and Suffering in Israeli Society: An Historical Perspective*, Israel Studies, Vol. 5, n. 2, Autumn 2000.

Another fascinating aspect was the habit that the newcomers had to change their name: since immigration to *Eretz Yisrael* symbolized a rebirth so, who made this step converted his name into one which created a deep connection with the Land of Israel. Many of the new immigrants, especially the youngest, took part in this symbolic process by adopting a name that seemed to be more appropriate to the place they lived in. In this way it was attempted to eliminate the old diasporic identity and to build a connection with the nascent Israeli society. This was part of the wider project of “secular Judaization”.

Pertinent to the Israeli civil religion formation process was also the decision to introduce in state schools the teaching of Jewish tradition, read in a secular and nationalist key; the purpose was to prevent the new generations of Israelis from growing up losing their contact with a specific cultural dimension. The question was whether it was possible to teach the content of religion without teaching the religion itself. In the schools, the study of the Bible was proposed and integrated within a modern pedagogical scheme which was able to impart the historical heritage. It was attempted to bring the essence of Judaism back to the messianic element of tradition in order to create an Israeli culture that contained elements of continuity and change. This task was critical, also because in some ways the traditional religion opposed the state’s symbolic system and therefore “competed” for the absolute loyalty of the people.

It was particularly important for the cultural absorption of the masses coming from Arab countries: their attachment to tradition was seen as an impediment to their re-education in the spirit of new national culture. *Mapai* wanted to institutionalize its authority by integrating new immigrants and providing them with an aggregating cultural element which could be an easier tool for their interpretation of Zionist civil religion²⁴⁸.

So, Ben-Gurion made the effort to articulate a new ideology that could united the country under the symbols of Statism (*mamlachtiut*) with the aims to convince large sections of Israeli society to adhere to it, to diminish the internal ideological and religious conflict, especially by co-opting the more conservative parties. In this way *Mapai* gained the opportunity to set the most favorable conditions for a relatively quiet political environment, in which was possible to build large government coalitions, engaging also those parties with very distant ideologies, in order to obtain a strong and extensive popular support: this strategy explains the historical pact that the prime minister made with the *Mafdal* (*Miflaga Datit Leumi*, National Religious Party ²⁴⁹), including it in any governmental coalition formed by the Labor Party until 1977. The main reason for this political

²⁴⁸ Aronoff M. J., *Israeli visions and divisions: cultural change and political conflict*, Transaction, 1989, p.4.

²⁴⁹ It was founded in 1956 as a union of the *Mizrahi* party and the *Poel Mizrahi* party, two veteran parties with roots in Israel dating back to the British Mandate. The main issue that occupied the party from 1956 to 1967 was the question of religion and state.

appeasement was not a question of obtaining more seats in the *Knesset*, but to avoid the eruption of a *Kulturkampf* with the most religious segments within the society.

2.1.2 The Ingathering of the exiles

Israel is a unique socio-demographic laboratory: from 1948 to 2005, the people immigrated in Israel were up to 2,993,007²⁵⁰, this number demonstrates Ben-Gurion's success in configuring Israel as a state based on immigration. It was mainly during the first three years of the state's life that the phenomenon known as "mass *aliyah*" or the "big *aliyah*" took place, contributing mostly to the achievement of that number of new-comers. The management of mass immigration was a hard challenge undertaken by the state becoming, sometimes, an example of lack of consideration for human needs, rather giving priority to the benefits for the community and not to the living-conditions of individuals. Fundamentally, it was believed that the power of ideology would have molded a new human being and a new nation but very soon, both the Israeli society and establishment became aware that it wasn't able to absorb immigrants without losing the founding ideals, due to the fact that mass immigration was one of the major causes of social change²⁵¹.

During the struggle for illegal immigration, the main Zionist slogan was "free immigration", but suddenly it became clear that despite high expectations and rhetoric, no one was really prepared for the tremendous mass of human beings who were going to arrive into the country. The fact that the population had doubled so quickly obliged the government to impose austerity, harder than the one applied by European countries during post-war reconstruction²⁵²: the situation was aggravated by the absence of monetary reserves and of a primary industry, as well as inadequate agricultural production. The high rates of immigration were mainly justified by the difficult situation that many Jewish communities throughout the Middle East were living; indeed, the relations between Muslims and Jews had been compromised following the foundation of the Jewish State (and the First Arab-Israeli War in 1948). In order to secure those Middle Eastern communities, the new-born state decided to carry out operations that could have allowed those Jews to come in Israel: for example, the so-called "Magic Carpet²⁵³", which made possible the transfer of the entire local Yemeni Jewish community.

The problem that these immigrants were arriving in Israel without the certainty to be provided with house and work; this precarious situation transformed their entry into the country in a traumatic experience. The government tried to solve these problems at the best of its possibilities:

²⁵⁰ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 2005, (<http://www.cbs.gov.il>).

²⁵¹ Eisenstadt S., Israeli Society, op. cit., p. 61.

²⁵² Segre V. D., *Israel: a society in transition*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971, p.142.

²⁵³ In 1949 about 45,000 Yemeni Jews were brought to Israel by plane.

for example, the lack of housing was partially resolved by setting new arrivals in Arab villages remained without its inhabitants after the 1948 clashes, or by creating new urban centers in the areas of the country still uninhabited. But the truth was that although the Israeli government was trying to organize such processes, actually it had limited control over migrations, due to the fact that unexpected political situations provoked the immigration of hundreds of thousands of people, whom the Jewish state could not turn its back to. Ben-Gurion, from his point of view, did his best to reject any statement that portrayed Israel as limited in its absorption capability: «We cannot put any restrictions on immigration. The State of Israel was born to provide, as it is their right, a house for these people²⁵⁴».

So, they created the *ma'abarot*, refugee absorption camps where immigrants were placed before being sent to their permanent residence; the problem was that, outside these places, there was no place to move them and so in a short time the situation became intolerable. But for the newcomers the hardest impacts to deal with were: the unfamiliarity with the Israeli bureaucracy, whose language was not understood by the newcomers and their difficult to get used to physical Labor, considered degrading for their homeland culture. The Zionist model was clashing with the reality that was emerging: the melting pot within different diasporas (*mizug galuyyot*), which was supposed to create a typical national character, appeared to be more difficult to realize than expected. This hypothesis of ingathering the exiles (*kibbutz galuyyot*) had to be compared with the concreteness of immigration processes; the reasons that motivated the decision to do *aliyah* were different for each group of immigrants and this motivational factor appeared to be the most crucial one in determining the construction of Israeli collective identity.

At the end of the day, the most important variable influencing the pace of immigration to Israel was more often the negative situation in the countries of origin than the attraction exerted by Israel's quality of life or by Zionist ideology. So, the great migratory flux that seemed to emphasize the rhetoric of the “ingathering of the exiles²⁵⁵” was only partially true. Indeed, the Zionist axiom were turned up side den: Jewish immigrants did not emigrate in order to “ascend” to Zion, rather to improve their living conditions. The gap between the ideological dimension of the Zionist project and the reality of Israeli facts was demonstrated by this mechanism. Coming back to Zion, in its original meaning, postulated the acquisition of political and moral maturity that would make Israel the elective homeland of all Jews. Moreover, “Israeliness” had to become the character of a common Jewish identity, a vehicle of homogenization. However, this did not happen, since immigrants, even once fully integrated into the new country, continued to cultivate their originating unique identity. Breaking this attitude was difficult, because the model of the melting-pot, envisioned by Ben-Gurion

²⁵⁴ Ben-Gurion D., *Israel: years of challenge*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963, p.46.

²⁵⁵ It refers to the final project for Jewish redemption that will be achieved through the end of the Diaspora and the ingathering of Jewish communities dispersed all over the world in the Land of Israel.

had as a reference point the *sabra*, educated by the ethos of Labor Zionism and committed to the collectivist ideal of *Kibbutz*. But this image described only a small minority of the Israeli population of that period, whose cultural influence was, despite the numbers, enormous. The fascination of this experience is strong still today, but it remains proportionally inversed to its diffusion among Israeli society, which had radically transformed.

2.1.3 Borders instability: prioritization of security issues and state consolidation

One of prime minister's priorities was to ensure Israel's security, in this case the concept was not confined to a military point of view, but extended to the economic, political and social spheres. Ben-Gurion, aware of the precarious conditions in which the country was subjected²⁵⁶, pursued an extremely cautious politics, at the same time characterized by aggressive rhetoric aimed at achieving certain economic and cultural standards that would allow national development. «Israel can't have security without immigration [...] Security means the settlement of the population in the empty Northern and Southern areas, the dispersion of the inhabitants, the creation of industries throughout the country, the development of agriculture and growth of the economy will free our people from the foreign economic dependency. It has always been my deep conviction that these advances are imperative to our survival²⁵⁷».

This perception was one of the causes that the Armistice of Rhodes²⁵⁸, it was never transformed into real peace agreements which left only a temporary arrangement to make Israelis' lives difficult without actually getting into the war. An example of this behavior was the economic boycott implemented by the Arab League²⁵⁹. Arab-Israeli relations between 1949 and 1956 were characterized by a low and incessant conflict, involving various areas of relations with the state of Israel. But no doubt, the most problematic expression of these hostilities was the attrition along the borders after the war of 1948; this situation dictated three basic necessities²⁶⁰ to the Israeli government: “settling the land”, ensuring security along the borders, breaking the Arab “political and economic siege”.

The most grueling areas of Israel were a particular prerogative of Ben-Gurion, who conceived the population of such territories as the essential prerequisite for Israel's survival. Of course, this type

²⁵⁶ Avineri S., *The making of modern Zionism...*, op. cit., p. 199.

²⁵⁷ Ben-Gurion D., *Israel...*, op. cit., p.61.

²⁵⁸ See chapter I, p. 59.

²⁵⁹ This measure was adopted in 1950 and it was widely approved by the members of the Arab League because it was considered as a ransom for the defeat of 1948. It was designed to deter other countries from having relations with Israel and to deprive the latter of relations with neighboring states

²⁶⁰ Segre V. D., *Israel...*, op. cit., p. 148.

of settlement was not carried out for economic reasons, but for security reasons: the creation of agricultural communities on the border would have increased boundaries' patrolling and defensive reinforcement. This project was tested by the several skirmishes, which between 1950 and 1953 involved the members of those establishments, the population in those areas and Palestinians refugees²⁶¹, who from the neighboring countries, tried to go back to their previous homes and recover some of their belongings; this situation brought to human losses on both sides, material damages²⁶² and great discomfort ²⁶³.

It should also be considered that these circumstances, together with the perception of a military equilibrium in favor of hostile armies, contributed to increase the sense of insecurity among Israelis. This perception was based on the certainty that military superiority corresponded with the ability to mobilize as many soldiers as possible and, referring to a numerical comparison, Israel had no chance. In order to obviate this weak spot, Moshe Dayan²⁶⁴(1915-1981) gave the greatest contribution in order to improve IDF efficiency; assuming that the amount of available troops could not have been significantly increased in order to compete numerically with the opposing armies' superiority, he decided to fully exploit technology and organizational capacities in order to rebalance this disadvantage. As a result of this very tense situation, an open military confrontation with Egypt broke out in 1956.

2.2 *Mapai* between foreign policy settings and internal divisions

Alongside the need to stabilize the security dimension, the government had to deal with some internal political considerations that directly affected the decision-making process regarding foreign and defense policy. The main players in the Israeli political scenario were the dominant *Mapai* and the opposition represented by the right party *Herut*²⁶⁵ and *Mapam*²⁶⁶; both formations were backed by growing public discontent that called for a firmer response to Arab provocations,

²⁶¹ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p.341.

²⁶² Shapira A., *Israel a history...*, op. cit., p. 274.

²⁶³ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p. 344.

²⁶⁴ He was born in Kibbutz Degania, then he became an important Israeli military leader, Chief of Staff in *Tsahal* and Ministry of Defense. He became famous for the Sinai Campaign in 1956 and his black eyepatch.

²⁶⁵ Founded in 1948, the *Herut* (Freedom) Movement represented the ideological continuation of the *Irgun Zva'i Le'umi* (the *Irgun*, also known as IZL or *Etzel*), one of the pre-state underground forces. During the period of the British Mandate, the *Irgun* was the military arm of the Revisionist Movement. *Herut* rose as an independent movement, separate from the Revisionist camp, due to ideological fissures that had opened up among the *Irgun*'s internal factions during the group's last days.

²⁶⁶ *Mapam* (*Mifleget HaPoalim HaMeuhedet*—the United Workers Party) was established in 1948 as a union between the workers' party *HaShomer HaTza'ir* and the *Ahdut Ha'Avoda– Po'alei Tzion*.

criticized the government for have failed to ensure effective protection to Israelis. Ben-Gurion became the personification of this militant-nationalistic state of mind and was the undisputed leader of the school of activism in foreign policy, giving predominance to military actions and putting aside the slow diplomatic mechanism. On the other hand, the vision represented by Moshe Sharett (1894-1965)²⁶⁷ was guided by a more cautious disposition.

In those days, the central theme of the debate between these two factions of the Labor camp was the military reprisals that took place along the borders of the new-born state; daily security issues prompted regular discussions within the government that was regularly split between moderates and activists, so decisions were taken with a narrow majority, or reflecting the difficult compromise between the two visions²⁶⁸. In this troubled spirit, the exhausted Ben-Gurion expressed his desire to withdraw temporarily from politics²⁶⁹, leaving Sharett the post for Prime Minister. The new premier found himself with the difficult task to keep the party cohesive, to lead the government and the country; In addition, the way Ben-Gurion resigned weakened the government and the authority of his successor. Indeed, before retiring, he used all his political power not only to appoint Pinhas Lavon as Minister of Defense, but also to appoint Moshe Dayan as Chief of Staff and to promote Shimon Peres as General Director of the Ministry of Defense. Indeed, the outgoing prime minister wanted to rely on this trio in order to continue the “iron wall”, defensive approach he built and to contrast Sharett's appeasement, the man who was chosen by the party as his successor (contrary to his opinion)²⁷⁰.

It was no coincidence that he chose these three personalities who shared the firm support for advocates of active defense policy, promoted by Ben-Gurion. Lavon's nomination was a direct attempt to undermine Sharett's premiership; the minister soon assumed a hawkish behavior, becoming a socialist thinker in Ben-Gurion's faithful *realpolitik* disciple. Dayan belonged to a new generation of tenacious commanders born on the national soil, while the three previous heads of the armed forces were politically independent, he was an active member of *Mapai*, with a reputation as a lover of political intrigue²⁷¹. He also showed total loyalty to his mentor, and after his retirement, along with Peres, he used to regularly visit the old boss to inform him of current issues and to have

²⁶⁷ Sharett was in effect the Zionist movement's ambassador and chief negotiator vis-a-vis the British Mandatory Authorities. In January 1954, after David Ben-Gurion retired, Sharett became Premier. Upon retirement, he became the head of the “*Am Oved*” (Working Nation) publishing house, Chairman of Beit Berl College and representative of the Labor Party at the Socialist International.

²⁶⁸ Medding P., *Mapai...*, op. cit., p. 215.

²⁶⁹ He decided to move to *kibbutz* Sde-Boker located in the Negev desert, very isolated and not affiliated with political parties.

²⁷¹ Shlaim A., *Il Muro di Ferro...*, op.cit., p. 130

his advice. His appointment as chief of staff was a milestone in the development of Israel's military doctrine²⁷², whose pivotal element was the retaliation approach.

Erroneously, Sharett was considered a weak, hesitant, lenient politician of Ben-Gurion and completely obscured by the latter, in fact he was an independent and original thinker as far as the question of Israel's security was concerned. As far as the difference between personality and character was concerned, there was no doubt that there was enormous diversity between them, Sharett himself admitted: «There has always been an incompatibility of character between us; I'm calm, discreet and cautious, Ben-Gurion is impulsive, impetuous, and acts according to his intuition. The term that distinguishes myself is caution, Ben-Gurion's one is courage²⁷³». But despite their incompatibility of character, they worked side by side for two decades (as prime minister and minister of foreign affairs) and they can even argue that they complement each other. It was since 1953 that under the impact of the deterioration of the security level, their political differences became more pronounced and their personal relations became tense and difficult, resulting in the tragic break in 1956.

The main point of divergence between the two politicians was a different conception of the Arab world: Ben-Gurion had little knowledge of Arabic culture and history and no sympathy for the neighboring populations; in general, his image of the Arab neighbors was that of a primitive, fierce fanatic enemy who exclusively understood the language of force, constantly emphasizing the extraneousness, the profound gap between “us” and “them”. Sharett, however, who lived part of his childhood in an Arabic village, spoke his language correctly and knew culture and politics well; having many Arab friends kept in touch with them and was able to win their trust, both politically and socially.

As for the general terms regarding an agreement with former Arab states, there was no real difference between the two politicians; both believed that an agreement should have been based on the status quo. Like Ben-Gurion, Sharett was unwilling to bring most of the Palestinian refugees back in 1948 or to surrender large portions of territory. Unlike Ben-Gurion, however, he attached great importance to patient, creative diplomacy and a conciliatory language that would reduce Arab hostility. Another important partition was the attitude towards the external factor: a key principle of Ben-Gurion's political credo was confidence in oneself, nourishing a deep belief in the Jewish people's ability to remodel their destiny to the Middle East through the direct action and the realization of factual situations: «Our destiny does not depend on what the Gentiles say but from

²⁷² After his appointment retaliation was incorporated into the concept of basic security their purpose was to increase the deterrent power of the army in other words their ultimate mute end by maintaining a peaceful border to strengthening Israel's basic security against the external threat the apparent manifestation of this turning point in military doctrine was the shift from a balancing doctrine to a counter-attack strategy the first is directed against a civilian population while the latter is directed against military targets.

²⁷³ Shlaim A., *Il Muro di Ferro...*, op. cit., p. 125.

what the Jews do ²⁷⁴»; Sharett acknowledged that the United Nations played an irreducible role in the creation of the State of Israel and was in favor of making the institution a wider task also in regulating the Arab-Israeli conflict. He believed that international public opinion influenced Israel's security and that it was therefore a factor to be taken into account in due consideration.

What Sharett did during his premiership was to try to create an alternative foreign policy that did not create the idea of a besieged fortress, but its starting point was to try to reduce the barriers that separated Israel from its regional context. This project was largely obstructed by the refusal of the minister of defense to accept prime minister's authority on defense issues; Lavon did not regularly know the government of army operations along the borders and his relations were often partial and inexact. Since 1954, the prime minister has started to convene a committee of major *Mapai* ministers to discuss defense and foreign affairs issues; The members were Moshe Sharett, Pinhas Lavon, Golda Meir and Haim Hareizel. In this way, the Cabinet could control the work of the defense minister and avoid direct confrontation with the latter within the ruling coalition: the prime minister feared that a *coup d'état* with Lavon would split the party, creating the conditions for a return to Ben-Gurion. Relationships with the latter became progressively tense and difficult, causing profound frustration and mental anguish in Sharett; the old leader had come back to assert his inflexible foreign policy line, maintaining an apparent formal subordination to the premier.

The results of the elections of June 20th 1955 showed the *Mapai* losing 5 of its 45 seats, compared to the previous *Knesset* and *Herut*, the main opposition party, increasing from 8 to 15 seats²⁷⁵, becoming the second largest party after *Mapai*. It was broadly widespread that the premier's moderate line had contributed to the party's poor electoral outcome. After the test of the urns, there was an attempt within the party to replace the prime minister with Ben-Gurion and to redeem the issue a large party congress was called to clarify the roles and formulate a clear position in foreign policy. Sharett was furious because he did not believe he had failed in his duties and therefore did not think he had to leave his place to a better man. Foreign policy was at the center of the agenda of *Mapai* Central Committee on August 8th 1955²⁷⁶; when it ended, the Prime Minister remained formally head of government until his rival succeeded in creating another coalition in 1955²⁷⁷. During this long period of time, his office was intolerable from the intensification of the conflict between the two factions: activists and moderators. Sharett was exhausted in trying to contain Ben-Gurion and his officers, and when he began to adhere to the idea of undertaking a preventive campaign against Egypt,

²⁷⁴ Vercelli C., *Israele storia dello ...*, op. cit., p 15.

²⁷⁵ *Knesset Election Results, Elections to the Third Knesset (26 July, 1955)*, (<https://knesset.gov.il>).

²⁷⁶ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Minutes from meetings* (Heb.), Archives of organizations and institutions *Mapai* - Labor Party, 2-023-1955-66, 22/05/1955 - 06/09/1955, pp.228-313.

²⁷⁷ Medding P., *Mapai ...*, op. cit., p.216.

Sharett decided to resign from his rival: his premiership was over and soon the Suez Crisis will have broken out²⁷⁸ in 1956.

2.2.1 Ben-Gurion's resignation and the Lavon Affair

The Sinai campaign against Egypt deepened the hatred between Israel and the Arab world without leading to that long-awaited strategic improvement of the Jewish state's security conditions. One of the direct consequences of this confrontation was the rise of Ben-Gurion's political prestige, which became undisputed leader on foreign affairs and defense policies. His power was so great that his coalition partners used to joke by saying "he only presented to the government proposals where he wanted to be defeated²⁷⁹".

Between 1957 and 1963 the Prime Minister enjoyed a quasi-undisputed political and political monopoly; This was also possible thanks to the fact that he was accompanied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Golda Meir, who being a follower of Ben-Gurion was guided in all the most delicate issues.

As the years passed, the Prime Minister became increasingly irritable and inflexible, adopting a personalistic and eccentric decision-making style so as to counteract his party colleagues, even with the faithful Golda. Some years later, in 1961, evidence emerged that Colonel Benjiamin Gibli had falsified some documents to attribute to Pinhas Lavon the responsibility of the Egyptian operation²⁸⁰, this episode became known as the "Esek HaBish²⁸¹" (the mishap). Lavon, then defense minister, repeatedly expressed his innocence, asking Ben-Gurion to rehabilitate his name but the leader replied that "he could not do it because he was not a judge ²⁸²".

In 1960 a special government commission was appointed to shed light on the events and finally it was discovered that Lavon did not actually order to do so. The issue continued to plummet for years by tearing up the *Mapai* and putting Ben-Gurion's weak faculties into the toughest test; the fact was that the incident had been the pretext for starting the struggle for succession to the old boss: on the one hand there were the *zeirim*, the young (like Dayan and Peres, faithful to Ben-Gurion) on the other, the vets, or party veterans (Meir, Eshkol and Sapir, joint front with Isser Harel, head of the *Mossad*), part of *Gush*, the party's institutional machine. These dynamics demonstrates how in those years the

²⁷⁸ Israel-led conflict against Egypt, which also included France and the UK to regulate some issues concerning the Suez Canal. He ended the ceasefire imposed by the joint action of United States and the Soviet Union.

²⁷⁹ Medding P., *Mapai ...*, op. cit., p.224.

²⁸⁰ It was about a series of acts of violence in Egypt, believed to have been conducted by Israeli intelligence.

²⁸¹ Merhav P., *The Israeli left: history, problems, documents*, Barnes, A. S. & Co. Inc., 1980, p. 202.

²⁸² Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op. cit., p.248.

internal politics began to become closely linked to foreign and defense policy, mutually influencing each other.

Finally, with an ad that surprised everyone, Ben-Gurion submitted his resignation on June 16th 1963. However, his decision seemed whimsical and suddenly preceded (and somehow announced) by a long process of splitting and deteriorating, of which the Lavon Affair was the inaugural event. Ben-Gurion was a tired and disillusioned man; although in 1963 Israel was safer than it was in 1948, the leader became subject to enormous and irrational doubts over the long-term destiny and survival of a famous country. The government then passed into the hands of the old guard of *Mapai*, led by Levi Eshkol.

He was the unanimous candidate for the old leader, both as leader of *Mapai*, and as Prime Minister. The premier also assumed the role of defense minister, demonstrating that he had learned well from his mentor how to handle defense affairs. In fact, Levi Eshkol increased *Tsahal's* deterrent ability and if the army arrived so well prepared for the 1967 conflict, the merit was largely her. Even though the Prime Minister immediately stated he wanted to maintain some continuity with the policies previously pursued, his rise to power made it clear that he could gradually take on Sharett's trend in foreign policy.

2.2.2 Levi Eshkol's Ma'arach versus Ben-Gurion's Rafi: the split inside the Labor camp

Meanwhile, on the domestic front, the prime minister promoted the birth of *Ma'arach* (*Ha'ma'arach le'Ahdut Po'alei Yisrael*), derived from the merger of *Mapai* and *Ahdut Ha'avodah*; this union was part of a series of maneuvers for the conquest of power in the struggle between the *zeirim* of Ben-Gurion and the victorious supporters of the premier. The entry of a new party into training could counterbalance these tensions by offending a group of young leaders who had important military experiences such as Yisrael Galili and Yigal Allon. Ben-Gurion strongly opposed the idea of creating a unique list with *Ahdut Ha'Avoda* because there were profound ideological differences with leader Yitzhak Tabenkin²⁸³ (1888-1977), further more leftist than the pragmatic *Mapai*²⁸⁴.

This political move provided Ben-Gurion's pretext to complicate the life of his successor, pulling back the Lavon affair again, trying to discredit Eshkol, accusing him of having decided to reinstate

²⁸³ Yitzhak Tabenkin became one of the principal thinkers and main voices of the *kibbutz* movement. He also became involved in labor party politics and was one of the founders of *Ahdut Ha'Avoda*, and subsequently of *Mapai* and of *Mapam*. Unlike many of his political colleagues, his support for the Greater Land of Israel ideology following the Six Days War.

²⁸⁴ Shindler C., *Israel, Likud ...*, *op. cit.*, p.64.

the former defense minister without having had the consensus from the party²⁸⁵. Whatever the motivation for this behavior, he changed his attitudes towards his ally by demonstrating an unprecedented treasure, even accusing him of weakening the country's security and trying to openly resign.

After the failure of his attempt, in 1965 a scission took place inside the Labor camp with the creation, of a new party, *Rafi* (*Reshimat Poalei Yisrael*, The Israeli Workers List); Dayan and Peres resigned from their posts and joined the new party formation. From an ideological point of view, this group was not differentiated for a clear difference, but rather had a close proximity to Ben-Gurion's technocratic style, compared to the conservative tendencies of *Gush*²⁸⁶; the “young guard” wanted to see a change within the party institutions through the cessation of the provision of some services provided by the *Histadrut*²⁸⁷. In general, these differences can be traced back to the general intent of breaking the unity of the party based on the sanctification of internal decision-making structures and basically the non-acceptance of Eshkol's leadership²⁸⁸; who, in 1965 elections, defeated Ben-Gurion: *Ma'arach* got 45 seats, *Rafi* only 10. Two months later, the Prime Minister was re-affirmed by submitting a coalition that enjoyed the support of 75 of 120 *Knesset* members²⁸⁹.

We can examine the division between *Rafi* and *Mapai* by analyzing the weaknesses that did not allow the party to learn how to contain the internal conflict and to avoid splitting. The characteristic that made possible for *Mapai* to maintain political dominance for a long time was the ability to incorporate various social groups into the party, providing them with material and symbolic ideals. In particular, this was reinforced by the internal decision-making process that used loyalty to the party to produce policies based on a consensus and a compromise acceptable to everyone. In the years before 1965, the party failed to achieve this kind of compromise and endangered its central role in state policy; perhaps the degree of conflict was so high and generalized that it was not possible to reach a meeting point. *Mapai*'s performance was therefore bankruptcy because, apart from the inability to contain separatist tendencies, in the 1965 parliamentary elections, alignment gained roughly 5% less votes than 1961 and 8% less of 1959²⁹⁰.

On the other hand, given the importance of the personalities who left the *Mapai* in order to form *Rafi*, the split also brought to light the strength of the party's organizational structure, demonstrating how the political power of the party was in the incorporation of the various forces social,

²⁸⁵ Medding P., *Mapai* ..., op. cit., p.272.

²⁸⁶ Lockery N., *The Israeli Labor Party* ..., op. cit., p. 12.

²⁸⁷ This debate was particularly important regarding the *Kupat Olim*, the health system.

²⁸⁸ Merhav P., *The Israeli left*..., op. cit., p. 236.

²⁸⁹ *Knesset Elections Results, Elections to the Sixth Knesset (1 November, 1965)*, (<https://knesset.gov.il>.)

²⁹⁰ Medding P. *Mapai*..., op.cit, p. 279.

institutional penetration and control over the structures and processes it had developed in previous years.

2.3 The Six Days War and the creation of a new State of Israel

Levi Eshkol, in fact, guaranteed the delicate transition between Ben-Gurion's monarchy and the new Labor Party, opening a new era for the domestic political arena, for example by authorizing the official burial of Jabotinsky's remains in Jerusalem, an event full of symbolic implications. In spite of his good performance, the attacks on that part of the labyrinth that he felt as a widow of Ben-Gurion kept on making it easy for him; it was described as weak and uncertain and, according to Abba Eban, this false image had somehow influenced Nasser's opinion, which, underestimating Eshkol, would have encouraged aggressive and anti-attitude from 1964 onwards ²⁹¹.

2.3.1 The waiting period and the shadow of a new Holocaust

The following three weeks were a traumatic experience for Israeli public opinion and passed on to history as the “waiting period”. The nation was prey to a collective psychosis. The memory of the Holocaust was an extremely strong psychological factor that deepened the feeling of isolation and accentuated the perception of the threat. Numerous Israelis felt that their country was facing the danger of an imminent destruction, for the matter did not concern them in the Tiran Strait, but on the very survival of the Jewish state. Three factors can help explain this widespread sense of fear among the Israelis: the constant and persistent national Holocaust trauma that has always played a central role in the political, cultural, and psychological socialization of all Israelis; the enormity of the firepower and the greatness of the rival hosts, and finally a widespread sense of political isolation. In support of this impression, after the blockade of Tiran, Nasser's prestige grew throughout the Arab world as ever before and began to talk about the imminent end of the “Zionist entity” On the streets of Arab capitals, slogans began to rise, asking Nasser to “throw Jews at sea²⁹²”. «The Israelis' morals were soon worn out by the daring Arab pressure fearing that the neighbors were laying the groundwork for a second of genocide. [...] In the Middle East, the air is full of violence, the appalling applause of the massacre, military marches, the massive crowd movements in Arab capitals, incendiary sermons in mosques, public places, and inflammatory statements [...] Compete with creating a new political situation that risks at any time to escape the calculations of the governors²⁹³ ».

²⁹¹ Vercelli C., *Israele storia dello stato* ..., op. cit., p. 217.

²⁹² Naor A., *Lessons of the Holocaust Versus Territories for Peace, 1967-2001*, Israel Studies, Vol. 8, n. 1, Spring 2003.

²⁹³ Vercelli C., *Israele storia dello stato* ..., op. cit., p. 242.

The hesitant actions of the Israeli government also contributed to make the situation more confuse, because they projected, a weak and insecure image of the country, giving Nasser the impression that he could push beyond the limit; Eshkol and his government, hoping for a diplomatic solution to the situation, tended to postpone the decision about possible military actions.

Meanwhile, the pressure exerted by the army on the government to agree to immediate military action against Egypt has intensified considerably, on May 28th the council of ministers decided to wait another two or three weeks. The same night, also known as the “Night of the Generals”, the high commanders of the defense expressed their disappointment and accused the political leadership of weakness and indecision. The present agreed to point out that time was an essential factor and that, the more expected, the more the price of the victory in terms of losses would be. On that occasion, the prime minister continued to support his position contrary to a preventive attack; what came into that situation was so harsh and offensive that it could have interpreted that meeting as an act of open rebellion.

However, following the entry into the Sinai of Egyptian forces, Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin decided to partially mobilize reserves as a precautionary measure; he, feeling very under pressure, felt the need to speak with Ben-Gurion, but instead of encouraging him, “the old man of Sde Boker” he warned Rabin, saying, «In this case, you, or anyone who allowed you to mobilize the reserves, made a serious mistake», adding: « You put the state in a dangerous situation. We do not have to go to war. We are isolated. You are responsible ²⁹⁴». These words contributed to the nervous break-down of Chief of Staff, who remained immobilized for twenty-four hours. Ben-Gurion, despite his extreme hardness, had good reasons to worry about the mobilization of reserves: thus, doing the nation was so destabilized, with its own frozen economy and daily shattered by the peak of tension generated by the threat of destruction coming from Arab media²⁹⁵. Rabin²⁹⁶ felt reprimanded by the old leader and these words contributed to his nervous collapse (May 23rd) that set him in for 24 hours, after which he returned to full management of his duties.

An atmosphere of “eve of Holocaust” was created, once again the enemy would come to destroy the Jews. PLO President Ahamed Shukeiri stated in those days: «In the event of a clash, no Jew will survive²⁹⁷.» People could not remain indifferent to rumors about the imminent end of the Jewish state. Damascus Radio broadcast on May 23rd the following proclamation: «Arab masses this is your day. Run to the battlefield [...] Let them know that we will hang the last imperialist soldier with the

²⁹⁴ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p.279.

²⁹⁵ Israel at that time did not have its own television, but the devices could tune in to Arab broadcasts.

²⁹⁶ One of the consequences of the fierce campaign launched by *Rafi* against Eshkol was the weakening of the self-esteem of Rabin, the prime minister's military advisor

²⁹⁷ Shapira A., *Israel a history...*, op. cit., p.298.

guts of the last Zionist²⁹⁸». Anxiety took over Israelis, thousands of them had experience the Holocaust and Adolf Eichmann's trial a few years earlier²⁹⁹

had rooted in society the *Shoah*'s awareness and the fear of annihilation. Rumors predicted the deaths of thousands and the presence of genocide in the minds of the Israelis was a powerful psychological force exacerbating the feeling of isolation, impotence and siege.

All over the country was nothing more than an imminent extermination: no one was saying that Israel would be conquered or its destroyed cities, even the newspapers compared Nasser to Hitler. *Ha'aretz*, the most important newspaper, came to publish a statement of May 26th 1967, alongside that of the German dictator of 1939³⁰⁰.

The former said, «If Israel wants the war, then Israel will be destroyed», the second: «If the Jews dragged the world into a war, then the heifers of the whole world will be destroyed». The *leitmotif* of the anti-Semitic threat came back with all its power.

In those days the sense of claustrophobia increased, so that the Tel Aviv Religious Council had instructed some rabbis to inspect parks, basketball courts, and empty land plots to consecrate them as cemeteries for the tens of thousands of deaths expected: only a haunted nation from the memory of the genocide he could prepare so meticulously at the massacre³⁰¹.

In contrast to these collective sentiments, the army's state of mind was set; the high commanders did not even doubt for a second to defeat the enemies, especially if the IDF had attacked first and for this reason invoked an immediate beginning of the conflict. On May 28th Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, in an attempt to respond to the needs of the country to be led by a strong leadership, held a radio talk, the latter being known as the talk of stuttering, because Eshkol during his enunciation did not he managed to decipher well what he wrote and incapacitated in his own words, adding more tension to what existed in the homes of the Israelis.

All this showed weakness and public opinion lost confidence in leadership just as the ongoing crisis required it ever before and began to increase public pressure for a change in the vertices; the ineffectiveness of these attempts to handle the crisis was also determined by the unexciting performance of Eshkol, which, having more diplomatic inclinations, had to face its lack of experience

²⁹⁸ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p.392.

²⁹⁹ SS Lieutenant-Colonel who was Chief of the Jewish Office of the Gestapo during World War II and implemented the "Final Solution" which aimed at the total extermination of European Jewry, He was eventually captured by Israeli intelligence agents on May 11th 1960, living under an assumed name in a suburb of Buenos Aires. Nine days later he was secretly abducted to Israel, to be publicly tried in Jerusalem. The trial, which aroused enormous international interest and some controversy, began on April 11th 1961. On December 11th 1961, Eichmann was indicted on 15 criminal charges, including crimes against humanity, crimes against the Jewish people and membership in an outlawed organization. On December 15th he was sentenced to death.

³⁰⁰ Segev T., *Il Settimo milione ...*, op. cit., p. 360.

³⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p.359.

in foreign affairs and strong internal critiques. His former party colleagues who had gathered in *Rafi* in 1965 had become the fiercest opponents of his government: Ben-Gurion, Peres and Dayan tried to exploit the situation, undermining the prime minister's credibility in an attempt to conquer important positions within the government.

The internal crisis was solved on June 1 with the formation of a government of national unity that included the two largest opposition parties: the *Gahal* with Begin and Sapir as ministers without a portfolio and *Rafi* with Dayan at the much-warded ministry of defense. This was also partly due to the orchestrated campaign by *Gahal* and *Rafi* to erode Eshkol's authority: the widespread Israeli population was exploited by the antagonists of the Labor government³⁰². In spite of Eshkol's qualms to take the road towards the conflict³⁰³, in the face of increasingly aggravated conditions, on June 4, the government gathered in full swing and made the decision to go to war³⁰⁴. On June 5th 1967, the IDF launched its attack: the Israeli Air Force launched an air strike that in a matter of hours would have allowed it to completely eliminate Egyptian aviation and inflict serious damage to Syrian. This memorable operation ruled the course of the clashes from the first few hours, and it was no coincidence that the Six Days War was the shortest and most striking conflict between all those conducted by Israel for the sake of victory, whose pliability gave rise to many problems.

2.3.2 From the anxiety of destruction to the euphoria of creation

The Six-Day War began with the attack of Israeli aviation on a surprise flight of June 5, 1967. Within a few hours Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi and Jordanian aviation was destroyed; with the annihilation of about 400 enemy planes, the fate of the Arab armies was marked. When the weapons were silent, a wave of euphoria in messianic colors swept the country. On June 8, the daily newspaper *Ha'aretz* said: «The glory of ancient times by the new state of Israel and its splendor will illuminate the enterprises the successes of Jewish society the element of continuity of the long history of the people of this country all over Jerusalem is our joy rejoicing the inhabitants of Zion³⁰⁵».

³⁰² Shindler C., *Israel, Likud and ...*, op. cit., p.64.

³⁰³ Minutes of the meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Security, June 4, 1967 (Morning), פרוטוקול ישיבת (בוקר) 1967 4 ביוני (ועדת השרים לביטחון), ISA-PMO-MinisterialCommitteesSecurity-0013qq9, 04/06/1967.

³⁰⁴ Minutes of the Cabinet meeting sitting as the Ministerial Committee for Security, June 4, 1967 (afternoon), (פרוטוקול ישיבת הממשלה בשבתה כוועדת שרים לביטחון, 4 ביוני 1967 (אחה"צ) ISA-PMO-MinisterialCommitteesSecurity-0013qq9, 04/06/1967.

³⁰⁵ *Ha'aretz*, June 8th 1967.

In less than one-hundred hours, the IDF had captured an area three and a half times larger than Israel itself, inhabited by more than a million Palestinians (the 61,000 sq km Sinai, the Gaza Strip 363 sq km and the West Bank with Jerusalem East 5700 square kilometers).

The Israelis began to pour hundreds of thousands into the new conquered territories and see the extraordinary victory with their own eyes: their fears in the previous week had turned into a national euphoria, but beyond this collective sense of relief and salvation. Two apparently contradictory emotions filled the nation: the first was the joy of returning to the land of fathers *Eretz Ha'avot*, the second was the sense of hope and expectation that the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict would be near³⁰⁶. After so extensive territorial gains, the idea of exchanging land for peace took on a new meaning: the phrase: «I'm waiting for a phone call from King Hussein³⁰⁷» as Dayan would say shortly after ceasing-the-fire³⁰⁸. The war had paved the way for a possible solution: in the end the Israelis had something to surrender in exchange for peace and the Arab states sooner or later understood it. This remarkable result has led many observers to question the self-defense character of the war, but this outcome is more to be attributed to *Tsahal's* undeniable strength and to the fact that when the government ordered the IDF to attack, political goals and territorial were not defined³⁰⁹; for example, actions in Golan, Jerusalem and the West Bank were not only defined in advance, but not even hypothesized. In some cases, the government was allowed to move from events, while others took advantage of the opportunities that were present in the field. Most likely, this was due to the conception that Eshkol had been in conflict, that is, of a limited and defensive war, which, in the end, had the removal of the Egyptian threat to Israeli security. Indeed, in the months immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities, the Prime Minister's diplomatic apparatus had sought in all ways to limit clashes exclusively on the southern front; they were aware of the possibility of some attacks on the Syrian front and were equally determined to avoid any military clash with Jordan, dodging the complications that would arise if it had to do with the West Bank population with a Palestinian majority³¹⁰.

The confrontation on the eastern front was then started by Jordan, with King Hussein dragged into conflict by the powerful current of Arab nationalism³¹¹, thus committing the greatest mistake of his life. If King Hussein had not begun the bombings on Jerusalem on June 5th 1967, Jordan would maintain control over the Holy City and the West Bank; in fact, nobody within the Government or

³⁰⁶ Bar-On M., *In pursuit of peace: a history of the Israeli peace movement*, United States Institute of Peace, 1996, p.26.

³⁰⁷ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p.416.

³⁰⁸ Bar-On M., *In pursuit of peace...*, op. cit., p.29.

³⁰⁹ The Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan, was very critical of the Cabinet because he had not thought of a political plan to target war operations on the field.

³¹⁰ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p.282.

³¹¹ The king flew to Cairo on May 30th to sign a defensive pact with Nasser.

the State Staff had proposed to conquer those areas before the Jordanian army made its move. At that point Israel had the historic opportunity to free Jerusalem, but Eshkol, Dayan and Rabin sought to postpone the decision as much as possible, aware of the consequences and repercussions that would result from the army's entry into the Old City. The balance of the invasion broke when Dayan, aware that the UN was declaring a ceasefire, without consulting the government gave orders to *Tsahal* to cross the walls and at 10 am on June 7th, the entire Jerusalem was in Israeli hands. In front of the Wailing Wall, the minister of defense declared: «We gathered Jerusalem divided, the capital of Israel that had been divided into two. We returned to our most sacred places and returned to not leave them anymore ³¹²».

Decisions on the West Bank were also followed by military developments, without a precise political plan; that meant that the Israeli reaction to the Jordanian bombing was held in the hope that the Hashemite king would give up. Dayan met with senior officers to analyze the unexpected development of the situation: «How do we control 1,000,000 Arabs? », asked Rabin. Another official corrected him: «1,250,000³¹³». In addition to these unknown consequences, another motivation that led to curbing the start of operations in the West Bank was the government's intention to preserve the status quo with Jordan; Intelligence had argued that King Hussein would not be involved in hostilities and the deal with Nasser was therefore a lightning strike. The Israeli military machine moved only when a serious threat to the government headquarters in West Jerusalem was posed: only then Rabin gave the order to IDF to begin operations on the enclave of Mount Scopus (*Har Hazofim*).

General Uzi Narkis gave the following account: «First, the Israeli government did not intend to conquer the West Bank, but was strongly opposed to such an action. Second, there was no provocation by *Tsahal*. Third, the reins were loosened only when a serious threat to Jerusalem's security emerged. This is what really happened on June 5th, though it is hard to believe it. The end result was something no one had planned³¹⁴». Rabin agreed that the final result was not derived from a political design, but from the contingencies of war: «War developed according to its intrinsic logic and this development brought into play all the forces of the Jordanian army set up in Judea and Samaria and willing or unhappy led to the conquest of the historical boundary of the Land of Israel: the Jordan River³¹⁵».

³¹² *Ibidem*, p.286.

³¹³ Rabinovich A., *Into the West Bank: the Jordanians were laughing*, International Herald Tribune, June 6th-7th 1992.

³¹⁴ Interview with Gen. Uzi Narkis, June 1967.

³¹⁵ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p.285.

2.4 The National Unity Government and the debate over the future of the conquered Territories

As soon as the canons were silent, an intense public and government debate began to understand what the fate of the Territories would be. The first official discussion took place on June 14th in the Ministerial Committee on Defense. In those days, the Cabinet began discussing the proposals made by the committee and reached a decision adopted on June 19th, confirming the general outline and specifying the conditions: guarantee freedom of navigation in the Tiran Strait, in the Gulf of Aqaba and in the Suez Canal, demilitarization of the Sinai. The resolution also proposed a similar covenant with Syria specifying that demilitarization of Golan was required, guaranteeing that it would not interfere with the flow and course of Jordan's waters.

The Cabinet meeting of June 19th decided that the old international borders between Israel, Egypt and Syria would be the basis for the definition of a permanent border; Israel would retreat from Sinai and Golan in exchange for peace³¹⁶. that decision was never made public but communicated to the United States to inform Cairo and Damascus. From there to a few days both Arab capitals responded negatively³¹⁷.

The West Bank Gaza Strip was not specifically mentioned in the diplomatic note, but it was understood that those areas (excluding Jerusalem) were negotiable. On June 27th 1967, by a unanimous vote of the Cabinet and almost unanimous to *Knesset*, the Israeli government annexed the Arab part of East Jerusalem under Jordan's control since 1948³¹⁸.

The Holy City with its expanded boundaries was unified as “the eternal capital of the State of Israel”. During the summer of 1967, the leadership of the dominant Labor Party, especially Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, was ready to explore the possibility of exchanging peace in exchange for territories.

The Israeli government however agreed to not return to the borders of 1967, even called by a dove like the Foreign Minister Abba Eban “the borders of Auschwitz”, but while some ministers were willing to give in exchange for peace a portion more or less extensive territories, others (including Begin and representatives of the National Religious Party) wanted the annexation of the entire West Bank, as part of the historic Land of Israel³¹⁹.

Finding a point of understanding over the West Bank was more difficult because of many ideologies represented in the national unity government. Menachem Begin's territorial maximalists collided with Eban's moderates. One position. Intermediate between these two solutions was proposed by

³¹⁶ Including respectively securing the right to free sailing through the Suez Canal and the Tiran Strait and allowing the Giordano water-free sliding.

³¹⁷ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p.416.

³¹⁸ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p. 292.

³¹⁹ It should be remembered that in those summer months of 1967 the country was still ruled by the National Unity Party formed in the days before the outbreak of June hostilities.

Allon who encouraged the annexation of Judea and the granting of a semi-autonomous status to Samaria, warning the colleagues not to rely too much on the Jordanian option. Dayan shared this skepticism with Hussein, but questioned whether Israel was able to establish unilateral arrangements on the West Bank; the defense minister therefore proposed to proceed in a pragmatic way to improve relations with Palestinian residents, but without deciding on their status in advance. It seemed, therefore, that for the parties most inclined to exchange some of the territories captured in 1967, there were basically two viable paths: to reach an agreement with King Hussein or to grant autonomy to Palestinians under Israeli control; the first alternative was known as the Jordanian option, the second as the Palestinian option. It is generally believed that Israeli post-war foreign policy was based on the first motion; Israeli leaders were so attracted to this option by failing to consider others.

Eshkol, despite his sympathy and for Jordan's leader, wanted to surely try the Palestinian option. The main considerations he considered were security and demography. He felt that Israel should exercise control over the areas that extended to the River Jordan for safety issues, but at the same time it was still in the wake of absorbing a large Palestinian population within the Jewish state: the problem was as a manager the West Bank without turning Israel into a bi-national state. Who perhaps was closer to the prime minister's position was Rabin: from a security point of view he thought it was a mistake to return the West Bank to the Jordanians, but at the same time thought that demographically speaking, the annexation of those lands would be was a disaster for the future of the state of Israel. For these reasons, he concluded that the best solution was to grant a special status to the West Bank³²⁰.

Allon and Dayan were in agreement to support the Palestinian option but their views differed on Israel's security needs in the West Bank. The former considered control of the Jordan Valley as fundamental while the latter considered far more important the control of the mountain range from Jenin in the north, in Hebron in the south. Allon was much quicker to put his ideas on the paper (presented to the Council of Ministers on July 26th) on the paper, which provided for the Israeli incorporation of the following areas: a wide strip of land 10 to 15 km along the Jordan River, the largest part of the Judean desert along the Dead Sea and a substantial area around Jerusalem, including the Latrun area.

This arrangement was considered to include as few as possible Arab inhabitants in the areas to be annexed to Israel. Dayan proposed instead the creation of those who defined the "four fists³²¹" along the mountainous ridge crossing the central part of the West Bank, each of these "fists" would consist of a large military base, surrounded by civilian settlements and located near the largest Arab city (namely Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, and Hebron). The most striking aspect of the plan was the desire

³²⁰ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op. cit., p. 295.

³²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 297.

to set up Jews in the heart of the area most densely populated by Arabs. In conclusion, the Allon Plan became the unofficial fundamentally groundbreaking Israeli government governing peace policy until 1977.

On February 26th 1969, Levi Eshkol died in Jerusalem, was sixty-four years old and suffered from cancer. A few months before his death, Prime Minister Eshkol had stated: "I can address my words to Nasser that Great Israel has never been and will never be our policy, we are flexible on everything and we do not want any part of the West Bank be populated by Arabs³²²»,

with these words the moderate nature of the more flexible area of the Labor government was reflected, of course this interview caused considerable debate among the hardest elements of the same party and among the ranks of *Likud*, still a member of the government of national unity.

The results of the war led the Israelis to feel a false sense of security, the conquest of an abundant portion of territory seemed to offer now the strategic depth that was previously lacking, posing a threat to security of other nature, forgetting that those lands lived a population with a unique history and identity. At that time, military achievements made him believe that the army had a ready response to every need, not to mention that military response was not always a countermeasure; Israel closed in this way, celebrating the new era that seemed to be finally inaugurated and adhering to the only strategy that seemed viable: to establish itself in the territories pending a hypothetical negotiation³²³.

2.4.1 Different voices inside the Labor Camp: ideological and pragmatic rifts

It is important to explain why the Labor Party that ruled the nation for a decade after the war and repeatedly declared its will to surrender territories in exchange for peace did not pursue peace more vigorously: stiffening Israel's position was a departure from traditional policies pursued by the elite of *Mapai* veterans and was contrary to the convictions of influential leaders such as Pinhas Sapir and Abba Eban. These (and some younger ministers) shared moderate tendencies: Sapir, considered the most powerful at political level in his party and in the nation, was convinced that continuing Israeli control over the Palestinians would be a disaster, he said: «If we continue to hold the territories will eventually possess them³²⁴». At the end of 1967, these Sapir-led veterans exercised full control over the party and covered the most important positions in government, so that they failed to impose their own political vision? Because they left an uncompromising attitude

³²² Bar-On M., *In pursuit of peace* ..., op. cit. p. 43.

³²³ Vercelli C., *Israele storia dello stato* ..., op. cit., p. 246

³²⁴ Bar-On M., *In pursuit of peace* ..., op. cit. p. 50

to gain ground in the party. Definitely Arab refusal ³²⁵ it was part of the motivations, but there were also some complex political dynamics within *Mapai* itself: in the fall of 1965 this group of veterans had been challenged by two new political factions within the party and new generations of political personalities who did not share their ideological beliefs; in May 1967 during the intense waiting period before the war, Prime Minister Eshkol was persuaded to form a government of national unity under heavy popular pressure and finally this paved the way for the return of most of this party's party Labor files in 1968. Although there was a complex combination of reasons that brought Ben-Gurion's *Rafi* from *Mapai*, an inexorable sequence of political events, the secessionist group realized that trying to obtain from outside what had failed getting from the inside was a mistake of political calculation, failing to bring enough votes to the Labor camp to achieve this goal³²⁶.

Less than three years after the great division, the *Rafi* returned to the Labor ranks by forming *Mifletet Ha'Avoda HaYisraelit* (the Israeli Labor Party), along with *Mapai* and *Ahdut Ha'Avoda*.

The result of these developments was that the prime minister was in an unenviable position; in the months after the Six Days War, he confronted himself with a closure attitude towards the compromise with the Arab side on one side, and on the other by members of his own party who called for a tough line and a policy of expansionism in new territories³²⁷.

Dayan's attitudes in the years after the Six-Day War were certainly influenced by two factors: his pessimism about the readiness of Arab governments to reach a compromise with Israel and its strong attachment to the land of the Bible. «We did not betray our dream, nor did we forget our legacy, we returned to the mountains, to the cradle of our people, to our heritage, to the Land of the Judges, to the fortress of the kingdom of David, to Hebron and Sichem³²⁸ in Bethlehem and Anathoth, at Jericho, and at the Jordan River. We know that to give life to Jerusalem we must deploy our soldiers and our weapons on the hills of Sichem and the bridges of the Jordan³²⁹». The strange mixture of pragmatic realism and poetic nostalgia was reflected in its policies that were very often inconsistent and contradictory, but which in fact helped Israel strengthen its control over the Occupied Territories and prevent efforts to test the new opportunities for peace.

³²⁵ Khartoum's resolution of 1 September 1967 was issued at the end of the 1967 Arab League summit, convened following the Six-Day War, in Khartoum, Sudan's capital. Eight Arab Heads of State took part: Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait and Sudan. The resolution declared a constant state of belligerence with Israel, ending with the famous paragraph containing "three no": no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiation with it.

³²⁶ Medding P., *Mapai...*, op. cit., p. 281.

³²⁷ Bar-On M., *In pursuit of peace ...*, op. cit. p. 38.

³²⁸ Nome biblico per la città di Nablus.

³²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

Dayan adopted a strategy of “maximum coexistence in a conflict” and this meant that: «Israel would brandish a stick over the terrorists' head and offer a carrot to those who were ready to live peacefully under the Israeli government³³⁰». The underlying idea was to pursue economic integration of the West Bank and Gaza, above all through the establishment of Jewish settlements, alongside the “open bridges policy”³³¹ allowing the Arabs to relive with families remaining in Israel and in the territories of having entry visas. This was followed by occasional choices and from now on, the absence of a strategic option by the government was compensated by the actions of groups of interest: on the one hand, this symmetry between the will of some formally annexed political formations (Begin and PNR, the Religious National Party) and the dissent of Labor governments that triggered the debate, still open, regarding the definitive annexation of Judea and Samaria. The result of this aptitude was not that significant peace initiative that could be conducted by governments led by the Labor Party between 1967 and 1973, whatever the motivation of the *Rafi* and *Ahdut Ha'Avoda* colleagues. Eshkol and Sapir and other *Mapai* veterans found themselves crushed on one side by the maximalist vision of Tabenkin and on the other by Dayan's ambivalent pragmatism. When the prime minister died in February 1969, Sapir's leader wanted to avoid a fight between Dayan and Allon for succession and then sought to keep power in the hands of Old *Mapai*'s guard calling the 70-year-old Golda Meir to accept the premiership. Golda's involvement meant not only renewing the commitment to adopting the policy of non-decision, but also starting to refuse any other formulation of possible dialogue, which made her thus the “Golda the intransigent” epithet: «Intransigence was about to become my second name³³²».

2.5 The re-opening of the Zionist territorial debate and the emergence of a new Israeli political culture

The victory of the Six Days War brought with it the beginning of a period of uncertainty in Israel, reopening the old question to the territorial aspirations of Zionism; a discussion held closed with the 1949 armistice agreements that seemed to ensure the possibility for the Zionist movement to be able to achieve its fundamental goals within the boundaries bounded. However, in the summer of 1967, the problem of what to do with the acquired territories was raised and faced with no easy answers to these questions. Zionism seemed to know a second youth, in a sort of Jewish revival, but on the wave of some paradigms that dramatically transformed the country's cultural phenomena: «For many, Israel is no longer the revolution of the new Jew, by the founding fathers, but by a fortune-in-law, to be firmly defended by affirmation of prophecy to be preserved with respect to

³³⁰ Vercelli C., *Israele storia dello stato* ..., op. cit., p. 248.

³³¹ Shlaim A., *Il Muro*..., op. cit., p..

³³² Bar-On M., *In pursuit of peace* ..., op. cit. p.44.

threats more than with the history of a political society, now for some it seemed to have to do with a messianic creation [...] Born from the encounter of modern Jewish nationalism with messianic Judaism, this well-organized, militant and rooted minority neo-Zionism, will draw the Israeli political landscape, modify the demographics of occupied territories, and will weigh decisively into the seeking a compromise with the Palestinians³³³ ».

Certainly, the government of national unity formed hastily before the outbreak of the conflict was unable to provide an efficient solution, as it consisted of twenty-one ministers belonging to seven different parties and represented a wide range of ideological positions (not counting the internal divisions to single strata). Within the government of that period, the most striking split was that of the National Religious Party, until 1967, ally placid, pragmatic and obedient to the Labor Party, but the Six Day War had awakened strong feelings among the *Bnei Akiva*³³⁴ militants, among the students of the *yeshivot* and among the NRP rabbis, inspired by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and his son Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook³³⁵.

They greeted the army's achievements as the first signal of imminent redemption; for them the state was not the end, but the instrument for the conquest of the earth, an element which provides for the sanctification of Israel itself³³⁶. Religion began to engage in history, preparing the ground suited to the young leadership of these movements to subdue the role of Zionism as a torchlight to Laborers, their youth organizations and their *kibbutz*. New pioneers felt and the newly conquered land would have been their frontier; the melancholy of messianic and nationalism feelings that they set up proved to be powerful and inebriating, indeed, place after place, the government³³⁷ surrendered facing the settlers' enthusiasm and silenced in front of the creation of new outposts, that were no longer built for safety reasons, but aimed at determining their belonging to the Jewish State.

Much more than the coastal plain, the hills of Samaria and Judea kept the memories of the Bible and incarnated most of Jewish history and identity; the holy places of Judaism had given a new messianic

³³³ Vercelli C., *Israele storia dello stato* ..., op. cit., p.247.

³³⁴ It is the largest religious Zionist religious movement in the world, with over 125,000 members in forty-two countries. It was founded in 1929 in mandatory Palestine.

³³⁵ For an in-depth analysis see Kaplan E., A Rebel with a Cause: Hillel Kook, Begin and Jabotinsky's Ideological Legacy, *Israel Studies*, vol. 10, n.3, Fall 2005.

³³⁶ Lieberman S., *Jewish Nationalism*..., op. cit., p. 82.

³³⁷ In January 1968 the government officially approved the creation of two *Nahal* outposts in the southern part of the Jordan Valley.

meaning to the newly won war³³⁸. A few days after the war, a popular Israeli singer recorded a song with this chorus: «O Mother Rachel we will never leave you again from your fields in Bethlehem³³⁹». These words and their historical meaning touched the hearts of those who were ready to give up those fields if they could have exchanged them with peace

The outcome of the war significantly increased Israel's negotiating position with regard to the "land for peace" criterion³⁴⁰, but they also awakened the dormant aspirations among many Israelis in the acquisition of the entire area coinciding with historic *Eretz Yisrael*, thus introducing within the society the seeds of political polarization. Meanwhile, the new territories allowed the Israeli defense leaders to cultivate the illusion of improved security through the new line of defense that was further away from Israeli-populated centers. The underlying idea was that the new conquests would complete the work started in 1948 in a perspective but more referring to a religious vision with a messianic background than the original Zionist project³⁴¹; the vision of the Great Israel or the Integral Land of Israel reappeared, referring to the concept of indivisibility of the Land of Israel, which claimed the spatial continuity of the territories included in the 1949 green armistice line and those newly conquered.

It was affirming the messianic conception of the Jewish state as, "the beginning of the dawn of our redemption" (*reshit tzmihat geulatanu*), an expression derived from religious Zionism, subverting the Israeli political agenda deeply. The debate about the fate of the Palestinian Territories occupied in 1967 heavily involved the state's state-of-the-art debate, so that each deployment of a different vision of the future of these lands used a different way to refer to these areas: Administered Territories, Opponents for Occupied Territories, and *Eretz Yisrael's* visionaries *Yosh* (or *Yehudah veShomrom*, Judea and Samaria). Not only that, the Israelis introduced a word previously unused by the Zionist vocabulary, that is, the term *hityashvut* (settlement) was replaced by the *hitnachalut* biblical term used in the Old Testament to describe the settlement of Israeli tribes in the land promised to them by God at the time of Joshua and the Judges³⁴².

In March 1974, the paintings and their ideology were firmly expressed in an extra-parliamentary movement called *Gush Emunim* (the blockade of the faithful), vaguely affiliated with the National Religious Party and with strong bonds with the righteous rightist. «Religious messianism, but not ultra-Orthodox, the Bloc of the Faithful was characterized by the will to colonize [...] the West Bank, increasingly called Judea and Samaria. The resorts chosen by the movement were not so much

³³⁸ Sharan S., *From Herzl to Rabin: the changing image of Zionism*, Holmes & Meier, 2000, p. 94.

³³⁹ Naor A., "Behold, Rachel Behold": the Six Days War as a Biblical experience and its impact on Israel's Political Mentality, *The Journal of Israeli History*, n.2a, vol.2, August 2006 p.245.

³⁴⁰ Bar-On M., *In pursuit of peace* ..., op. cit. p.27.

³⁴¹ Vercelli C., *Israele storia dello stato* ..., op. cit., p.249.

³⁴² Bar-On M., *In pursuit of peace* ..., op. cit. p.36.

the valley of the Jordan or the Golan, which had some strategic importance, as the hills of the West Bank, though densely populated by the Palestinians that corresponded to the areas over which the Jewish kingdoms of David and Solomon [...] The movement sanctions with its birth that redefinition of Zionism that was less and less political project is increasingly religious design [...]»³⁴³.

His leaders would set tones and content of right-wing activism over the territories and forced Labor into defensive Labor; the settlers were the expression of the will to make the 1967 conquests definitive and as such would be a hindrance to the path of peace as many Israeli, Arab and American politicians had observed in the 80's and 90's. The *Gush Emunim* would become the course of two decades a powerful figure in the Israeli political scenario.

Jewish settlements began from areas already inhabited by Jews in the past (such as the Etzion block) to those demographically and traditionally Arab. The phenomenon gradually unfolded and almost by itself, without obeying a predetermined plan³⁴⁴. In the following years, other colonies appeared in various parts of the Golan, the Gaza Strip and the Jordan Valley; they were of a different kind depending on the objective they responded to: the creation of a bearing security zone following strategic principles, the establishment of the historical land of the people of Israel motivated by Messianic drives or more simply the desire to improve their standards of life while paying attention to the governmental facilitations that stimulated the transfer to areas of the West Bank³⁴⁵.

This phenomenon was possible thanks to the hesitations of the government, in fact the attitude of the executive was ambiguous at first: some doves, such as Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir, were always opposed to colonization, while others supported it unreservedly. Allon and Dayan were ambiguous, the second most likely to be willing to swap land for peace, even in the West Bank, but on other occasions it seemed to be opposed to abandoning one centimeter of the Earth of biblical Israel. Some of the exponents of the *Ahdut Ha'Avoda*, like Galilee, silently shared the illegitimate aims of the settlers: to some extent they found in this enterprise, taken in common with the image they had, to be the heirs of the first pioneers who had created the Zionist country, conquering *dunam* after *dunam*. Soon, the attitude more or less favorable to the colonists soon intertwined with the internal rivalries to *Mapai*, especially between Dayan and Allon.

The peak reached in April 1968 when a group of militants led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger took accommodation at the Garden Hotel in the Hebron suburbs to celebrate Jewish Passover; they had a valid permit one night in return for the promise to return to Israel the following day. But at the right time, militants raised an Israeli flag and said they wanted to stay³⁴⁶; Hebron's accident created

³⁴³ Vercelli C., *Israele storia dello stato*..., op. cit., p. 292.

³⁴⁴ Morris B., *Vittime*..., op. cit., p.420.

³⁴⁵ Elad M., *The Birth of the Core Issues: the West Bank and East Jerusalem under Israeli Administration, 1967-76*, Israel Affairs, vol.20, n.1, 2014, p.78.

³⁴⁶ Morris B., *Vittime*..., op. cit., p.422.

a precedent, and the Colonies, thanks to the help of some elements within the Defense apparatus, had been able to deceive the decision makers and this pattern would be repeated in the following years, whenever the movement the authorities were impudent. Second, the government did not immediately expel the settlers, an act of weakness³⁴⁷ which was largely dependent on the presence in the coalition of National Religious Party and *Herut* members.

Finally, the compromise was reached and settlers were allowed to stay in Hebron, moving to the barracks of the army in the city. From a few months, that bridgehead became an agreement for the construction of a large Jewish settlement in the suburbs of Hebron, the current Kiriya Arba, which some years later turned into the transfer of many other settlers in the heart of Arab city, both in buildings occupied by Jews before the massacre of 1929, and in new buildings. Almost without exception, the government provided the settlers with the indispensable tools to be successful: soldiers to ensure protection, water dispensers and emergency generators for the supply of electricity.

In the first decade after the war, Israel had created a total of 21 settlements, including 10,000 inhabitants³⁴⁸ located in the West Bank in Hebron, Har Gilo (near Bethlehem) Gush Etzion, Kedumim, Ofra and Ma'ale Adumim; to these were added the outposts built in the valley of the Jordan. The rhythms of the colonizing enterprise will remain somewhat until 1977 when, with *Likud's* victory, it would have witnessed the affirmation of the messianic political rhetoric. The Six Days War, made the Israelis live a mystical reunification experience with their past, thus representing the fulfillment of the prophecies of redemption and triggering epochal change in the nation's political culture, which changed Israel's political history.

³⁴⁷ Furthermore, we must emphasize that, on one side, the institutions were very reluctant to authorize the use of force by the IDF in order to physically remove the Jewish occupiers and, on the other, that those settlers were very motivated, making impossible to convince them to leave without resorting to coercion.

³⁴⁸ Elad M., *The Birth of ...*, op. cit., p.77.

Chapter 3. THE RISING OF THE RIGHT AND MIFLEGET HA'AVODA'S LOSS OF DOMINANCE (1973-1981)

The October War was not only a trauma for the Israelis, but its most important function was to be the catalyst event that raised the discontent and the changes that took place within Israeli society, transforming them into the epochal political change of 1977, when *Likud* (headed by Begin) won the election, ending the thirty-year Labor dominance.

One of the important factors that is likely to have contributed to the decline of *mamlachtiut* was the successful building of the country; Labor was associated with the years state-formation and the following nation-building years, but as time passed by, the existence of the State no longer evoked wonder; sense that reality fell short of the ideal further contributed to the end of the pioneering epoch with which Labor had been identified and from which it derived its legitimacy. The result was that by 1977 there was a semi-total correspondence between the party and the state itself in all its major activities.

One of the area in which *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* conspicuously failed was in the socialization of succeeding generations of *Mizrachi* immigrants and this fail had been confirmed by analysis of the electoral results of the elections since 1973; as we are going to see in this chapter, from that year, voting behavior indicated that Labor camp lost the political support of the new Israeli proletariat (represented by Oriental new-comers) and of the younger generations.

Moreover, after the 1967 War, an ideological and parliamentary re-alignment was taking place; as we are going to see in the next paragraphs, Begin's *Likud* will find a reliable partner in the religious front, breaking the historical alliance within Labor and NRP, which contributed to the overturning result of 1977. Finally, the mismanagement of the events of the Yom Kippur showed an evident erosion of responsiveness of the party to the demands of the public, contributing to the erosion of Labor legitimacy and dominance.

But mostly, the greatest challenge that *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* failed to face was the crisis of identity that many Israelis felt and that corresponded to a change in political culture, leaving space for the *Likud* to win ideological predominance in this new landscape.

3.1 The end of *Mifletet Ha'Avoda*'s hegemony

The military debacle was deemed by Israeli public to be responsibility of Labor government and it proved to be the catalyst event which exacerbated criticism of policies, style and ethos.

A considerable section of the general public (and of members of the party) considered Dayan to bear the burden of responsibility for the military mistakes together with Minister Galili (the Prime

Minister closest adviser) for the unreality and immobility of Israel foreign and security policy in recent years. One part of the General Party Committee wanted these men to be removed from their positions in the leadership and this demand was formally presented with the proposal that the list of candidates for the 1973 elections, to be re-opened. Unfortunately, this last request, if accepted, would have meant putting off elections to a later date.

This postponement, even if it would have gained popularity among the electorate, would have caused more difficulties for the Labor Party in the attempt to establish a broader coalition in a national unity government. This impossibility would have brought to the government's lack of legal or moral mandate, which would prevent the formulation of any far-reaching decisions, leading to a complete political paralysis³⁴⁹.

Moreover, ever since the October War not only *Mapam* but also many members of the Labor Party Central Committee had demanded the annulment of the Galili Paper³⁵⁰ (the previous statement of party policy approved in September 1973³⁵¹) and the revision of the *Ma'arach's* election platform in a more consistent dovish direction. One of the earliest internal party reactions took place in a meeting in November, which was carried on by former high-ranking army officers affiliated with *Mifleget Ha'Avoda*; the leader of this group Joseph Nevo (mayor of Herzliya at that time), called the meeting to discuss the need to revise party policy on political-military affairs. He stressed that it was impossible to separate the issue of leadership from policy-making and stated that, as a consequence of the war and since the basic premises on which the Galili Document was based, this paper should be reviewed. In the first Central Committee after the war, on November 28th 1973, was called for a major policy debate, characterized by unprecedented mutual recriminations between top party leaders. Many speakers called in vague terms for a need for changes in political personnel and new foreign policy; in his speech Moshe Dayan answered to those who directly or indirectly called for his resignation by saying that the prime minister merely had to accept the letter of resignation he had previously given her. He emphasized that this was a decision the premier had to take and not the critics to his policies.

The meeting continued with two conflicting points of view clearly emerging; top contending party leaders associated with Sapir attacked Dayan and those closely associated with him, like Peres, and claimed that the Galili Statement was inoperative. The supporters of Golda Meir and Dayan

³⁴⁹ Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op.cit. p. 287.

³⁵⁰ For summaries and recommendations regarding the Galili Document see The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Party. Articles* (Heb), 4-04-1970-190, Section: Personal archives, Archive Lova Eliav (Arie Eliav), 1970/01/0- 1981/12/31, pp. 29-31.

³⁵¹ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Mercaz* (Heb), 2-932-1974-1125, Series: Office of the Secretary General, 1973/09/03, file n.29.

attacked those who criticized them and contended that the Galili Statement remained a relevant and active part of party policy.

A group composed by representatives of all factions of the party presented the Central Committee a new document containing fourteen principles³⁵². This paper, even though a compromise was essentially of a dovish character and stressed Israel's readiness for peace negotiations and territorial compromise, while, of course, guaranteeing defensible borders. Pinhas Sapir openly claimed that the new fourteen-point policy statement was the only relevant statement for the future, addressing himself personally to Dayan and specifying that security and the absorption of the immigrants would have greater priority on the settlement project of the Occupied Territories. Moreover, he argued that peace was more important than borders, about which the party should have been more flexible.

Then Golda Meir answered back and, after having defended her policies, she contradicted Sapir's position by clearly stating that she refused to consider the Galili Statement as a dead issue, calling for a direct vote of the Central Committee on the issue. The tensions caused by the extremely rare, direct and public exchange of personal criticisms and expressions of opposing views between Meir and Sapir reached a peak at 2 AM, when the Committee was called to cast a vote in order to decide over Golda Meir's candidacy for prime minister; the result was 291 in favor of Golda against 33 and 17 abstentions³⁵³. Most of the remaining 615 members of the Central Committee were already gone by that moment³⁵⁴.

The vote on the Galili Statement was avoided by a decision of the Secretary-General of the party Yadin, who declared that there was no need for such vote, since Sapir's statement was the new official interpretation. Sapir opposed Meir and Dayan's requests for an open vote regarding the Galili Statement not only because of his ideological oppositions against the provisions for settlements in the Territories, but also because he feared that an open confrontation on the issue could have caused a split in the party. That also the reason why he and his comrades decided to support anyway Golda's leadership, while pressing for policy changes.

The Galili Document was thus not cancelled, but frozen and the Alignment conducted the election campaign in a dovish tone, against the *Likud's* attacks. The changes in the period following the traumatic events of October 1973 represented a new threshold in the developing of Israeli political system. This was a major crisis of confidence in the credibility of the national party leadership and in the Labor Party, manifested also in the emergence of new internal party coalitions. The

³⁵² The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Agenda of Meetings of Party Institutions* (Heb), 2-932-1971-1021, Series: Office of the Secretary General, 1973/12/05, file n.1021, pp. 29-31.

³⁵³ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Minutes from meetings* (Heb), 2-023-1973-108b, Section: Archives of organizations and institutions Mapai - Labor Party, 1973/11/28 - 1973/12/20, vol. II, pp.39-120.

³⁵⁴ Aronoff M.J., *Power and ritual...*, op. cit., p. 151.

developments of the War of October caused deep shock among the people, which started to ask questions which reached the source of trust, there was developing a crisis of confidence in the government and the Secretary-General of the party at that time, YigalYadlin, replied back saying that: «The people will be wise. When the time comes for them to vote, they will vote correctly³⁵⁵».

3.1.1 1973 Elections and Labor's reaction

These attempts of reform worked out only partially. Indeed, the elections to the Eighth Knesset (held on December 1973) faced the Israeli voters with a dilemma³⁵⁶: on one hand they wanted to express their bitterness over the establishment's mistakes, by voting against the Alignment; on the other had, they wanted to reach some political settlement and perhaps also peace, so bringing the *Likud* to power would have ended such hopes. And since these opposite desires neutralized each other, the results didn't bring any clear change in the administration.

Despite the fact that the party tried hard to distance itself from the *mechdal*, the way in which the war was managed persuaded many *Mizrachim* to desert Labor; the vote of Oriental Jews for the *Ma'arachin* 1973 plummeted by 20% (from one-half of the *Sephardim* to one-third) Begin's cultivation of the development towns³⁵⁷ began to pay political dividends, indeed, the new generation of Israeli-born *Mizrachim* deserted *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* in droves; if before the Yom Kippur war 62% of Israelis born in Asia and Africa were prepared to support the Alignment, after the conflict only 43% of Israelis from a *Mizrahi* background were still willing to endorse the policies of Labor camp³⁵⁸.

On the eve of elections, in December 1973, opinion polls showed that a huge section of electorate (from 20% to 40%) were undecided which party to support and it was unprecedented, given the degree of conservatism of the Israeli voter. But this time, the sense of discrimination experienced by *Sephardim* was finally about to boil over in those elections and, similar drop in support, was mirrored in the voters between the age of 25 and 49, who turned their backs on Labor³⁵⁹.

³⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

³⁵⁶ Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op.cit. p.288.

³⁵⁷ *Ayarat Pitu'ah* is a term used to refer to the new settlements that were built in Israel during the 1950s in order to provide permanent housing to a large influx of Jewish immigrants from Arab countries, Holocaust survivors from Europe and other new immigrants. The towns were designated to expand the population of the country's peripheral areas and to ease development pressure on the country's crowded centre. For this reason, the majority in such towns were built in areas scarcely populated, such as Galilee in the north and Negev in the south.

³⁵⁸ Shindler C., *Israel, Likud...*, op.cit., p.74.

³⁵⁹ Penniman H. R. and Elazar D. J., *Israel at the Polls 1981*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1986, p. 49.

Indeed, the epoch of *Ha'Avoda's* ideology was clearly identified with the period of the British mandate which culminated in 1948 with the independence and with the first years of the existence of the state. The fact that Labor has relative difficulty in attracting the votes of the young (many of whom did not experience the "epoch") indicated a partial short-circuiting of the party's claim to dominance. While there was evidence that Labor lost its ideological dominance, it retained a clear position of power on the crucial issues of defense and foreign policy. After the war, about 70% of the sample thought that there were substantial differences between the alignment and the *Likud* on these matters. When asked the question, "Whose foreign and defense policies are closest to your own attitudes?", 60% answered the alignment, 35%, the *Likud*. So, *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* retained many of the characteristics of a dominant party³⁶⁰.

The 1973 elections, viewed in the perspective of the Labor Party's declining claim to dominance, must be seen as part of a process and not as a break with the past and. From this perspective, the rise of the *Likud* was possible thanks to this decline; indeed, we have to underline that this massive shift away from the Alignment permitted the *Likud* to increase the percentage of vote compared to past elections and to be regarded as a genuine alternative to the ruling élite. At the end of 1973, the *Ma'arach* lost 5 of its 56 seats in the *Knesset*, while the second largest parliamentary bloc, the *Likud*, increased its seats from 32 to 39. The election results made it possible for the Alignment to form a government with a stable majority: *Ma'arach*, 51; the Independent Liberals (*Liberalim Atzma'im*), 4; *Mafdal*, 10³⁶¹; the Alignment-affiliated Arab lists, 3 and *Ya'ad* (Civil Rights Movement), 3³⁶². This time, however, the renewal of the traditional coalition came up against difficulties, the parliamentary decline of the Labor camp, the NRP's relative weight increased and led to increase its pressure for concessions in legislation, the educational system, domestic and foreign policy³⁶³. The Alignment was able to win the elections, but its majority was quite narrow.

3.1.2 From Golda Meir to Yitzhak Rabin

The following meeting of the Central Committee took place on February 24th 1974. The main item on the agenda was the ratification of the proposal by the party's candidate for prime minister to form a minority government of 58 members (out of 120 *Knesset*) composed by 54 *Ma'arach* members plus 4 members from the Independent Liberal Party. Traditional Labor's coalition partner, *Mafdal* (or National Religious Party) had (due to internal factional strife) demanded the formation of a

³⁶⁰ Arian A., *Were the 1973 Elections in Israel Critical?*, Comparative Politics, vol.8, n.1, 1975, p.163.

³⁶¹ The religious parties declined in favour of the *Likud*. the NRP obtained 10 seats instead of 12 the Torah Front, 5 instead of 6.

³⁶² *Knesset* elections results

³⁶³ Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op.cit. p. 289.

National unity government with the participation of *Likud* and a change in the status quo agreement on religion and state, requests which were found unacceptable by Labor Party. Only on March 10th the *Knesset* voted its approval of the new government led by Golda Meir which included *Maftal* and Dayan.

However, the coalition did not last longer than a month, indeed on April the prime minister submitted her resignation; the Cabinet crisis emerged in the wake of the interim report of the Agranat Commission appointed by the government to investigate the causes and responsibilities for the blunder of the October War. This report put the blame on the IDF's chief of staff and on the chief of the intelligence, without commenting the responsibility of the defence minister.

The public opinion however refused to accept this artificial separation and demanded a general dismissal of the people involved, but since the Dayan refused to resign and both Meir and the *Rafi* faction inside the party didn't want to dismiss him, Golda Meir had no choice other than to submit her resignation. Moreover, another reason for that dramatic step was that the premier was aware of the ferment among Israeli public that couldn't be ignored. This discontent manifested itself in a variety of protest groups, which became a widespread social movement demanding the removal of the whole old establishment.

This highly critic environment was the main factor that influenced Golda Meir to resign on April 11th 1974, which automatically brought down the coalition she had formed. After this event took place, only two alternatives were left: holding new election or appointing a successor, who would have been called by the President of the State to form a new Cabinet. After an intense discussion, Labor General Committee decided on April, by a majority of 283 to 170, to form a new government³⁶⁴; the most popular candidate for the task was the finance minister Pinhas Sapir, who had built such a strong and dominant position in the party. But, instead to become prime minister he decided to keep a dominant role behind the scenes, being a kingmaker by selecting the party's candidate for the highest political position in the country. Indeed, he was key in the designation of Rabin by giving him his personal support in front of the party³⁶⁵.

Due to this, the final contest (held between Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin) was won by Rabin and, for the first time in Israel's history, the premier was not nominated by his predecessor, rather elected by a secret ballot at a meeting of the party's executive³⁶⁶. The premier won by a narrow majority, 298 to 254 (54% to 46%). The final choice was made in favor of Rabin because he was a man able to improve the image of *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* in the eyes of the electorate and of the younger generation in particular. On the contrary, Shimon Peres, who had (without any doubt) a

³⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 290.

³⁶⁵ Aronoff M.J., *Power and ritual...*, op.cit., p. 158.

³⁶⁶ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Minutes from Meetings* (Heb), 2-2025-1974-59, Series: Party Bureau Protocols, 1974/04/16, file n.59, p.55.

considerably wider political experience, was also strongly associated with the *Gush*, the party machine. This leadership contest was thought in order to show to Israeli public that the decisions were no longer being made behind closed doors but in front of the public opinion, even if it, inevitably, gave also the evidence of a still divided party.

After the formation of the Cabinet, Rabin and Labor executive institutions had one more choice to make between the creation of a small coalition government, or of a wide national unity government; so, the party met on May 9th³⁶⁷ and it was decided, by an overwhelming majority of 302 to 36 (6 abstentions), to authorize Rabin to form a coalition between *Ma'arach*, the Independent Liberals and the *Ya'ad*³⁶⁸. The resolution left the door open for the *Mafdal* to join the coalition even on a later date, while the motion proposed by *Rafi* to open talks with *Likud* in the attempt to form a national unity government, was taken down. Only then the prime minister was able to form his government and to present it to the *Knesset*, winning a vote of confidence of 61 to 54 (5 abstentions) on June 3, 1974.

3.1.3 Rabin's first government, 1974-1977

Yitzhak Rabin was a novice in politics when he became prime minister on June 3, 1974. In the struggle for the party's leadership, one of his main advantages was that he could not be associated in any way with the grave mistakes of Yom Kippur War; Rabin was an element of newness in country's political life, indeed he was the first prime minister to be born in Israel (precisely in Jerusalem, in 1922) and the first to come from *Tsahal* and not from *Gush*. His government seemed like a breath of fresh air; among its 19 ministers, only 7 had served in the last executive and the average age of members was lower than any other previous Israeli administration.

However, the new governmental body was far from being a united and harmonious team and many of its problems resulted in internal conflicts within the majority party. In fact, *Ma'arach* (or Alignment) was born in 1968, but its constituent factions still retained their sectarian loyalty, making it very difficult to form a uniform guide-line for action. The most important ministerial portfolios were then divided among the most influential souls within the Alignment; Shimon Peres, who enjoyed *Rafi*' support, gained the Ministry of Defense, while Yigal Allon, a member of the *Ahdut Ha'Avoda*, assumed the role of Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, the animosity between Rabin and Peres was still there, creating a very hostile environment for cooperation: the distrustful Rabin

³⁶⁷ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Minutes from Meetings* (Heb), 2-2025-1974-60, Series: Party Bureau Protocols, 1974/05/9, file n.60, p.44-118.

³⁶⁸ The CRM was established by MK Shulamit Aloni toward the elections for the Eighth *Knesset* and was a member of the Eighth to Twelfth *Knesset*. The CRM concentrated on the issues of civil rights, separation of religion and state, reform of the electoral system, and the end of the occupation of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. During the period of the Eighth *Knesset*, the CRM changed its name to *Ya'ad*.

thought that his rival was constantly plotting against him and Peres never stopped the attempts to undermine the prime minister's authority. This total and continuous reciprocal rivalry has produced deleterious effects on government action.

As prime minister, Rabin faced further difficulties in leading a coalition with a very close parliamentary majority (61 out of 120 *Knesset* members), due to *Mafdal*'s refusal to join the coalition. This party had always been a traditional ally of *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* since 1948 and its leaders had taken part in almost all governments however, after the Six Day War, the NRP had become more nationalistic, opposing the return of any part of the biblical land and shifting closer to the right-wing parties. Hoping to attract National Religious Party's consensus, Rabin had granted the recourse to public before the conclusion of any peace agreement that would have called up to the concession of any part of the West Bank. These efforts bore fruit in September 1974 when, finally, *Mafdal* joined the government coalition and increased the number of seats in the *Knesset* (ranging from 61 to 68). At the same time, this new entry seriously limited Rabin's freedom of action over Jordan and the Palestinian question.

After several months of stalemate, the signs of a new approach began to emerge through prime minister's speeches; Rabin clarified that the path to peace included big risks, at least as much as those associated with a denied dialogue and that a government unprepared to face them would have failed its task anyway. He also stated that the path to peace was not necessarily to begin with direct talks between Israel and the Arab neighbors, but it could have gone farther gradually, by involving other actors and granting small portions of territory in exchange of a political agreement. This approach represented a significant departure from previous policy, which consisted of maintaining the status quo and dodging political risks, although the need to gain time in relations between Israel and the Arab world continued to be relevant in Rabin's thinking.

According to Shlomo Avineri³⁶⁹, appointed Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1976, Rabin had a grand strategy to close the Israeli Arab conflict: «Rabin told me clearly that he did not doubt that the Arab-Israeli agreement would involve the withdrawal of most of the Territories that IDF had conquered during the Six Day War, except Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and other

³⁶⁹ He is an Israeli political scientist. He is Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He also headed the Israeli delegation to the UNESCO General Assembly, and in 1979 he was a member of the joint Egyptian-Israeli commission that negotiated the Cultural and Scientific Agreement between the two countries. During his time at the Foreign Ministry, Avineri followed the official line of the Rabin government preferring the "Jordanian Option" and participated in some of the meetings with King Hussein. But in his writings, and internal Foreign Ministry memoranda, he tried to present the conflict with the Palestinians within a wider context of a conflict between two national movements, beyond the narrow ideological or security-oriented conventional Israeli discourse. These developments were curtailed by the *Likud* electoral victory in 1977 but were resumed in the 1990s in the second government of Rabin and led to the Oslo accords between Israel and the PLO.

strategic points of interest. Densely populated Arab areas in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip could not remain under our control forever and, in order to ensure maximum negotiation flexibility, we should have avoided to build Jewish settlements in those territories. The Jordanian kingdom should have been the partner for talks about the future of Judea and Samaria. However, and this is the core of the matter, this process should not take place in the wake of the Yom Kippur War and under the pressure of Arab oil power, then at its peak. Rabin said that for no reason Israel should have withdrawn from the Territories in a way that might have seemed an expression of weakness. The first task of his government was therefore to gain time for Israel to rebuild its strategic, diplomatic and psychological position after the tragedy of Yom Kippur, and only then (Rabin indicated a period of about five years) from a strong position, the Jewish State could have engaged in agreements according to the guidelines I had indicated³⁷⁰».

The crucial point of the strategy was to erase the idea from the minds of the Arab neighbors that a weak Israeli State would have made concessions. The strategy impressed Avineri because he was simultaneously moderate and extremist: dovish in the ends, hawkish in the means, generous to the concessions that could have been made to the Arabs states in a context of a peace agreement, but inflexible in the way that this agreement would have been reached³⁷¹.

As we will see later, personal problems added to political issues brought Rabin to announce his resignation on April 7th 1977; they put an end to nearly thirty years of Labor rule and brought *Likud* to power. Three days later, the party's Central Committee elected Peres as head of the transition government and party leader, heading the *Ma'arach* for the very close general elections of May 17th 1977. The first term of Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister lasted just three years; Rabin himself considered this period as a personal failure, regretting his lack determination in imposing his authority on the party and the government. Because of this overly cautious temperament, he did not even stand out in the achievements gained in foreign policy's issues: his strategy was to rebuild an iron wall made of Israeli military force to a point where concessions could not be interpreted as a sign of weakness. So, the real lesson that he could draw from his premiership was that time did not play in favor of Israel, unless it was spent in an active diplomacy in seeking peace with the Arabs; lesson that Rabin put into practice when he returned to power 15 years later.

With his resignation, Rabin left the Labor Party in full stalemate: even the main editorial of January 10th 1975 in the *Jerusalem Post* (a paper traditionally supportive to Labor) was headlined "Labor Disarray" and said: «It has by now become almost a clichè to remark on the disarray inside the Labor Party. And while the other political parties maybe in an equally sad state, the inner weakness and tensions of the Labor Party are of more interest and importance since they intrude more easily and directly into the arena of government» and it followed: «The machinery of the historic party, with

³⁷⁰ Shlaim A., *Il Muro di Ferro...*, op, cit., p 370.

³⁷¹ *Ha'aretz*, *Leader in the Grip or Political Constraints*, December 1st 1975.

its forums for airing issues of state and giving direction to the party “representatives” in government have become moribund³⁷²». The editorial criticized Prime Minister Rabin for having failed to show any sign of interest in resuscitating his party. It attributed this behaviour to his natural caution, his absorption in the affairs of state and to his former military career, entirely divorced from party organization. Rabin had been disappointing for those who had expected him to take an active role in assuming the leadership of the party and in the process for its reform; the premier has indeed concentrated all his efforts on government matters of state to the detriment of internal Labor affairs³⁷³. The secretary-general criticized Rabin government’s behaviour for its low degree of consultation with party’s institutions, much less involved in any stage of decision. These were the conditions in which *Ma’arach* was about to face the 1977 elections.

3.2 A change in political culture: towards the 1977 elections

The elections of 1977 must be considered a turning point in the political history of Israel. As showed by Asher Arian³⁷⁴, the analysis of the upset can be thought of in terms of three concentric circles, which refer to different temporal distances of the elements that brought to 1977 results.

The three years from 1974 to 1976 marked the definitive Labor decline, decreed by the elections for the Ninth *Knesset* in 1977. The end of the hegemony of what was the party of the founding fathers was due, to an irreversible weakness of the Left camp rather than to an excellent performance of the Right (*Ma’arach* decreased its presence in the *Knesset* from 51 to 32 MKs, while *Likud* increased it from 39 to 43). The consequences of this change were not only political, but also institutional and social, that because the victory of the right parties was possible mainly thanks to some transformations that took place in the country.

Indeed, Begin was prepared to promote and take advantage of the ideological aspect of the political clash, with the aim of representing the “other half” of Israel, that was formed by *Mizrachi* Jews and supporters of Jabotinsky’s Revisionist Zionism, a more nationalistic and conservative current³⁷⁵.

In 1977, an overturn of the existing political balance occurred and a new hegemony was built thanks to the convergence of different trends; from the strictly political point of view, *MiflagatHa'avoda* was paying the price for the dramatic mistakes of the Yom Kippur War; while, on a social level, long-term transformations were matured, the most important one was the attempt of integration and the growing awareness by the *Mizrachim* within Israeli politics. Among the alienated group, *Ma’arach*

³⁷² Jerusalem Post, Labor in Disarray, January 10th 1975.

³⁷³ Aronoff M.J., *Power and ritual...*, op.cit., p. 163.

³⁷⁴ Arian A., *The Elections in Israel, 1977*, Jerusalem Academic Press, 1980, p.

³⁷⁵ When the State of Israel was founded, this group within the Zionist movement saw the triumph of the socialist Labor trend, characterized and represented by Ben-Gurion’s pragmatism.

increasingly came to be perceived as the party of the European-born veteran elite; so, the Oriental Jews increasingly found response to their demands in the anti-establishment³⁷⁶ leader of the opposition Begin³⁷⁷. There was no coincidence, thus, that one of the slogans of *Likud* was “*leHeitivim haAm*³⁷⁸” (benefit to the people³⁷⁹), aiming to highlight the populist character of its political and economic proposal, in opposition to the choices made by former Labor governments.

The increasing accusation that had spread against Labor establishment was therefore in accordance with the aim of the Begin’s party in challenging the *mamlachtiut*, Ben-Gurion’s statalism. In addition, the interweaving of these factors became even more intricate if we considered that, after the events of 1967, the linkage between religious and rightist electorate was becoming more and more consolidated³⁸⁰.

The overlapping between religious identity and *Mizrachi* origins made even more interesting the bind of the ethnic and religious variables, destined to assume growing relevance in the near future. A resounding shift from the secular policy of the first thirty years was taking place and the appearance of actors in the political scenario, which were capable to reshape the agenda based on policies that were argued on the identification with religion’s public function.

The forthcoming 1977 elections would have created a solid linkage between right-wing parties and the religious circles, underlining the ideological affinities between Jewish nationalism and religion, pursuing the definitive re-emergence of messianic orientation which, though never disappeared from Israeli landscape, it had been absolutely minor in both cultural and political terms since 1948. As we have seen in the previous chapter (pages 23-27), the occasion was given by the conquest of West Bank during the Six Days War; with that event was created the connection between rightist ideological identity and the demand for representation manifested by the groups that were at the margins of political power and society in Israel.

That meeting originated the linkage between the spiritual ferment in Jewish (and partially also Israeli) identity and the nationalism on ethnic basis, that *Likud* aimed to represent. The emergence of this trend was only possible with the parallel decline of the Left and its role as the building agent of a new society, whose founding values are Labor-inspired.

³⁷⁶Whereas in the early years of the state, Ben-Gurion succeeded in denying legitimacy to its main opponent, *Herut*, over the years it became increasingly difficult to do so, especially after the inclusion of this party in the national unity government of 1967. Indeed, the participation of Begin and his colleagues established their legitimacy and paved their ascension to power.

³⁷⁷Aronoff M. J., *Israeli visions...*, op.cit., p. 7.

³⁷⁸Vercelli C., *Israele...*, op.cit., p.286.

³⁷⁹This policy was translated into a series of measures that stimulated capital profits and encouraged private consumptions.

³⁸⁰ This trend will be confirmed on subsequent electoral rounds, culminating in the direct elections for the prime minister in 1996.

Religion as a political instance came back, bringing with it the reopening of the great question about the secular character of the State; Labor's decline and its ideological monopoly also concerned the vision enacted by the founding fathers about the state's autonomy (institutional and cultural) from religion. Indeed, Ben-Gurion choose the opposite mechanism with the aim to create Israel's civil religion (where the religious symbols were interpreted and re-elaborated in a new secular framework); on the contrary, between the 1960s and the 1970s, the contents of religions were undergoing a process of politicization and used in order to validate nationalist tendencies, justifying them through the use of messianic references³⁸¹. Until those years, religion was ambiguously understood as a cultural element belonging to a secularized tradition by the majority of Israelis; but in 1977 the religious element came back reversing the relationship with politics and trying to establish its primacy. However, it must be underlined that *Mapai* first and *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* after, they both tried to accredit themselves as credible political partners in the eyes of the religious front; thus, the Labor camp had already supported and indulged on a number of draft laws that gave control to these parties over religious affairs since long time.

This tendency caused two results: on one hand the political comeback for Labor was modest (truthfully, the religious groups found themselves culturally closer to the right-wing parties rather than to the left side of the parliament); on the other, the religious Right increased its bargaining and conditioning power, giving birth to long-term consequences reflected on domestic and international image of Israel.

While this parliamentary welding between the nationalist and religious parties was taking place, the *Gush Emunim* was founded³⁸², providing its support to the settlement cause with its action on the ground; it immediately conformed itself as a flexible structure, able to represent the interests of the settlers animated by a messianic ethos. Indeed, they were deeply committed to the principle of absolute devotion, *messirut hanefesh*, and to the aim of sanctifying the Land with their physical presence.

It was very significant that the form adopted to represent the interests of the settlers was an extra-parliamentary movement, thus introducing a variable capable of influencing the choices of parties inside the *Knesset*, able to maintain the maximum freedom of action. On one hand, *Gush Emunim* organized a new way of living and sharing politics, introducing those aspects of the mass movements: the informality of interpersonal relationships, the refusal or the opposition to politics seen as a mediation product between parties, supporting a rhetoric of a new civil religion and of a new Israel.

The historical time of *Eretz Yisrael* should have been facilitated through the conquest of the space, through the physical possession of the Land (and not Time anymore), ending the age of

³⁸¹Vercelli C., *Israele...*, op.cit., p.290.

³⁸²We have already mentioned about this movement in the previous chapter, at page 25.

old party-politics; this was a radical subversion of original Zionist assumptions, in which the conquest of physical space was understood as a time-dependent variable, rather of political realism, for which it did not matter where the Jewish State would have been built, but how this process could have been carried on³⁸³. The aim of the Block of the Faithful was extremely ambitious, for it was mainly focused on Israeli society itself and not on the Palestinian side of the dispute.

In order to understand this process, it can be noticed also at a linguistic level, there was a change in the use of the term to refer to settlements: the old concept of *hitnatkut*, dear to Labor movement (that is to say the idea of creating agricultural communities where one could live and work collectively), was opposed to the new-old concept of *hitnachalut*, linked to the non-productive biblical value of the territory. Indeed, for the followers of the Block of the Faithful, the land did not have any economic or security implications, but it only referred to the ancestral bond of the *brit* (covenant) between *Yhwh* and its chosen people³⁸⁴. After the epoch of secular Zionism, the age of Religious Zionism had come: a radical change manifested, an overturning of the political culture of the country³⁸⁵.

«New Zionism reformulated the original revolutionary ideology in religious terms and succeeded in gaining first the support of the young and subsequently of a large part of the general Israeli public³⁸⁶». And, even if this ideology was not implemented by the majority of the population, it established its dominace anyway. Liebman and Don-Yehiya³⁸⁷ analyzed the changing of political culture in Israel tracing the role of traditional religion in civil religion, which is “what is most holy and sacred in political culture³⁸⁸”. In their work they identified Labor Zionism as the dominant of several varieties of civil religion from independence to approximately 1967; at that moment the new civil religion reached a dominant position, reaching its peak of influence with the *Likud* victory in 1977. This new political culture was focused around the conception of the Jewish tradition and the Jewish people, characterized by penetration of religious symbolism in civic life³⁸⁹ and being a counter-ideology that legitimized and motivated commitment within politics.

³⁸³Bidussa D., *Il Sionismo Politico*, op.cit., p. 43

³⁸⁴Newmann D., *From Hitnachalut to Hitnatkut. The Impact of Gush Emunim and the Settlement Movement on Israeli Politics and Society*, Israel Studies, vol.10, n.3, Fall 2005, p. 207.

³⁸⁵ Vercelli C., *Israele...*, op.cit., p.290.

³⁸⁶Weissbrod L., *From Labor Zionism to New Zionism: Ideological Change in Israel*, Theory and Society, vol.10, n.6, 1981, p. 798.

³⁸⁷ Liebman C. S. and Don-Yehiya E., *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State*, University of California Press, 1983.

³⁸⁸*Ibidem*, p. ix.

³⁸⁹Aronoff M.J., *Israeli Visions...*, op.cit., p. 126.

3.2.1. The crumbling Rabin's government

The first circle is related with the unique events which preceded the 1977 elections. Rabin's great misfortune was to take over the reins of government at a historical low tide for Labor Zionism. He was also inexperienced in dealing with politicians and political intra-party issues.

In the second week of December 1976, the unique events which directly led to the elections took place. On Friday afternoon December 10th, the first consignment of U.S. F-15 fighter planes arrived in Israel, a welcoming ceremony was arranged and government ministers and MKs took part; unfortunately, the planes arrived less than one hour before the beginning of the *Shabbat* (on Friday evening), leaving inadequate time to hold the ceremony, return home and prepare for the inauguration of the *Shabbat*. The ultra-orthodox front (including *Agudat Yisrael*³⁹⁰) was furious and moved a vote of no-confidence as a result of what they felt, that to say insensitivity to the feelings of the religious population and deliberate desecration of the Jewish festivity by government and army officials.

As an orthodox religious party, the *Mafdal* could only agree with the stand taken by the Religious Torah Front³⁹¹, but as a coalition member of the Labor-*Mapam* led government, the NRP could not easily support a motion of no-confidence: the dilemma was complex because of Israel's law of collective responsibility³⁹². This law grants the prime minister the possibility to fire a minister if the *Knesset* delegation of that minister fails to support the government in certain specified votes. Few days after, the government won the confidence by a vote of 55 to 48; Dr. Yosef Burg, the senior NRP minister, sustained the coalition, but the rest of his delegation abstained: the abstaining behaviour pushed Rabin to quickly dismiss the NRP ministries formulating the law of collective responsibility and declaring to the *Knesset* that abstention of NRP's delegation was to be considered a voluntary act of resignation³⁹³, announcing also the decision to hold early elections in the spring of 1977.

Lastly, Rabin made a further big mistake deciding to the held *Knesset* elections as the first one of the series including the *Histadrut* and local elections, in this way political elections were supposed to be the first ones to absorb the wrath of the electorate against the party. Indeed, the public sense that

³⁹⁰It began as a political party representing orthodox Jews in Poland. It later became the Party of the Haredi population of Israel. It was the umbrella party for almost all Haredi Jews in Israel until the 1980s, as it had been during the British Mandate of Palestine.

³⁹¹ The Religious Torah Front was formed when the Ultra-orthodox parties *Agudat Yisrael* and *Poalei Agudat Yisrael* decided to fight the 1955 elections on a joint list.

³⁹²The law must be understood in terms of the difficulty of ruling without a secure majority in the parliament, making ministers responsible for their behaviour of back-benchers.

³⁹³ Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op.cit. p.318.

Labor was a party grown indolent after nearly three decades in power began to manifest itself in a series of scandals that came up during the electoral campaign.

The election year opened with the suicide of Avraham Ofer, the former head of *Shikun Ovdim* (*Histadrut's* Housing Corporation), on January 3rd 1977; this action was due to his disappointment at learning that investigation against him started for having taken by fraud public fund. Then, just a month later, the State's Attorney General filed charges against Asher Yadlin, the head of *Kupat Olim*³⁹⁴, for having taken IL 280.000 in birbes³⁹⁵. Rabin's policy of openness had uncovered the malfeasance of his predecessors and clearly demonstrated the old way of operating; yet the public perception of *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* didn't change, despite party's effort to propose a different style of ruling under a different leadership.

In march, one last (but not least) scandal involved Leah, Rabin's wife; rumors that she had a still active bank account in the U.S.³⁹⁶ spread and the existence of the account was confirmed by an article written by Dan Margalit published on *Ha'aretz* (March 15th 1977). It was illegal for Israelis to hold a foreign currency account abroad without prior authorization by the division of the Treasury and, because of the allegations against her, the prime minister decided to give his resignation as leader of the Alignment³⁹⁷. Rabin despite his good intentions was defeated by the party's past misdemeanors. Actually, in retrospective, Rabin gained in moral prestige by his decision to share his wife blame and to suffer all the consequences up to designing the position for which he had fought so hard³⁹⁸.

The image of mismanagement remained with *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* until the end of the electoral campaign when, in April, the State Comptroller³⁹⁹ issued its annual report and indicated the lack of

³⁹⁴ This was especially embarrassing to the government since he had already been approved as head of the Bank of Israel, although he had not yet taken office.

³⁹⁵ Even if this allegation was discounted by the judge, the Yadlin Affaire seemed to confirm the cancerous corruption within Labor.

³⁹⁶ After President Carter's assignment, during a visit in Washington some Israeli embassy employees heard some gossip that Leah was carrying out transactions at the Dupont Circle branch of the National Bank.

³⁹⁷ The punishment for violating the law was up to three years imprisonment or a fine three times the amount illegally held.

³⁹⁸ Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op.cit. p.323.

³⁹⁹ The role of the State Comptroller is to oversee and inspect the executive branch of Israel's governing administration. The Comptroller is elected by the *Knesset* by secrets ballot. In order to ensure the Comptroller's independence and freedom to inspect the Government's actions, it is controlled by the *Knesset's* Finance Committee rather than by the Ministry of Finance. The Comptroller's responsibility is to the *Knesset* alone. He interacts with it and reports his findings to it. The Comptroller's duties and responsibilities as are defined in the Basic Law of 1988: auditing the economy and the administration of the State, inspecting the legality, efficiency and economy of the audited bodies.

sufficient supplies in the army emergency warehouses; moreover, it criticized the IDF for wasting financial resources and condemning its large scales expenditures that were not subject to parliamentary control. This fact touched a raw nerve since that was one of the problems Israel faced during the Yom Kippur War and the public had been assured that it would never happen again.

All these irregularities stirred up a great resentment among Israelis: the *Ma'arach* was perceived as having been sucked into a vortex of corruption which permeated its entire structure; the *askim* (impolite term coined to refer to party bureaucrats) became hate-figures and symbols of the malaise affecting the entire country. The new leadership personified by Rabin and Peres, which was supposed to bring a breath of fresh air, was in effect overwhelmed by the degree of corruption accumulated over decades⁴⁰⁰. The age of ideology was rapidly fading and the post '48 generation of Israelis had different expectations; unlike their parents they were not pioneers, they wanted a decent life and a leadership which governs fairly and rationally. These aspirations were set against a background of economic downturn and inflation, in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. Thus, whether the issue was party democracy or runaway inflation, the future of the territories or the honesty of party leaders, the *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* could offer nothing that the public wanted.

3.2.2 1973, a catalyst year

The Yom Kippur War was a very earthquake for the political system, moreover in two months after the cessation of hostilities, the elections for the eighth *Knesset* were held, but they did not completely reflect the loss of public confidence in the ruling leadership. A period of incubation between 1973 and 1977 elections brought out many of the tensions within the system and stirred the difficulties faced by the Alignment's leadership; almost every problem faced by the system become more acute and a crisis of legitimacy in the government and its handling of the country's developed. Israel had lost its image of invincibility, morale suffered and in addition to these psychological issues the country faced economic and social problems as well. This was the most obvious political outcome of the period following the Yom Kippur War that was immediately followed by the rising of protest movements, composed by intellectuals, politicians but also by militars.

The most important one was *Yisrael Shelanu* (Our Israel) lead by Motti Ashkenazi.; he demanded Dayan's resignation and rapidly he was joined by 5000 sympathizers who agreed to sign a petition. The rapid growth of the protest movement fed on a deep malaise that the war and the unresolved political problems fueled among many Israelis. This movement was significative because its members were animated by an unwavering patriotism, which was the fuel for their bitter criticism of the government⁴⁰¹; their primary motivation was their love for the state and their desire to fight

⁴⁰⁰ Shindler C., *Israel, Likud...*, op.cit., p.81.

⁴⁰¹ Bar-On M., *In Pursuit...*, op.cit., p.74.

corruption: «We are trying to break the walls of the Israeli bureaucracy and cause a small crack in the self-defense edifice the Israeli leaders have erected around themselves⁴⁰²».

Even if some of those movements fade away in a matter of months, those groups activated and channeled the spread loss of faith in the ruling party authority and allowed other parties to mobilize the support of the public, becoming real alternatives to a Labor-led government; the decline of Labor spiritual dominance and the setting up of accounted ideology enabled the voters to change their behavior⁴⁰³, even if Labor majority survived in 1973 elections.

The results will become visible just in 1977 elections, when voters faced a new reality: three parties were competing for power⁴⁰⁴, for the first time the electorate was offered more than one real candidate for prime minister; with two alternatives to its rule, the *Miflagat Ha'avoda* will lose more than a third of the voters.

3.2.3 Changing political system, in a changing society

Between the Sixties and the Seventies some processes, that were at work for long time inside Israeli society, became evident through resounding effects that changed the political system of the country. The event that concentrated all these dynamics were the 1977 elections. First of all, we can notice that the established parties were undergoing a crisis of succession; the political leadership of Israel was the same who set up the political structures in the pre-state era and which ran the country after independence. Then, more than fifty years later, that élite had all but relinquished its dominance and the next generation of political leaders had failed to emerge.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, we can assume that the very crisis of leadership inside the Labor camp started in the 1960s with Ben-Gurion's retirement, reaching its peak with the Lavon Affaire, event the party never really recovered from. Under these circumstances, the ability of the *Gush* to maintain dominance in elections of 1963, 1969 and 1973 was impressive, even if in those years, a significant drop in its votes could already been registered.

So, what happened in the Sixties was that two processes overlapped: the aging and retirement of the traditional political leadership and the emergence of politicians that came from the high ranks of *Tsahal*. Both *Ma'arach* and *Likud* (with Ariel Sharon and Ezer Weizman⁴⁰⁵) experienced an influx

⁴⁰² Interview with Motti Ashkenazi, *Ma'ariv*, February 8th 1974.

⁴⁰³ Arian A., *Elections...*, op.cit., p. 35.

⁴⁰⁴ We are referring to Alignment (*Mifletet Ha'Avoda* and *Mapam*), *Likud* and the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC). In the next paragraphs we are going to analyze these political groups and their behaviours during 1977 elections.

⁴⁰⁵ After the establishment of the State of Israel, Weizman was a pilot for the Haganah in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. He served as the commander of the Israeli Air Force between 1958 and 1966, and later served as deputy Chief of the General Staff. Upon retiring from the military, Weizman joined the right-wing Gahal party. n

of new leaders with a strong IDF background, but the aftermath of the 1973 War accelerated the process of leadership turnover especially in the Labor camp: Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yigal Allon replaced Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan and Aba Eban in 1974 respectively as prime minister, defense minister and foreign minister. The attempt made by the veteran leaders (especially by Pinhas Sapir) to introduce former IDF personalities into the government and into the party organization was adopted in order to enhance the party's public image by the prestige of these the new leaders. The emergence of a younger leadership with strong roots in the defense establishment and the eclipse of the old party élite became clearer in the years of the Rabin's government, when an uneasy bifurcation existed among the Labor members of the Cabinet, dividing those with a military past and those with a *Gush* experience. It seemed that a strong and unified leadership failed to emerge so, under a certain point of view, Begin was the only to represent continuity with the leadership of the Founding Fathers for he was the last of the older generation still active in politics. He was then in a position of top leadership.

In the eve of the 1977 elections, not only party leadership was in flux, but also the electorate was undergoing to some major transformations. The factor that affected most was the demographical change in the composition of the Jewish population, with the emergence of the immigrants from Asia and Africa and their children as the dominant ethnic group in the country⁴⁰⁶. The composition of Israel electorate changed dramatically since the first election in 1949, then most of the eligible voters were immigrants from Europe, but in 1977 almost at order of the eligible voters were Israeli-born more than half were immigrants or children of immigrants from Asia, Africa or North Africa⁴⁰⁷; demographic changes are important to understand the 1977 political turnout because for the first time in half a century the movement lost the hegemony it had held in Israeli politics since well before the establishment of the State. This political power was based on the ability of *Mapai* to control country's economy and bureaucracy and to give life to an extended patronage system.

Among *Mizrachi* Jews immigrants and their descendants there was a sense of abandonment and betrayal with the Labor establishment for its inability to improve their status within Israeli society, indeed many of them remained on the lowest level of the socio-economic and education ladder while hopping inflation and housing shortage intensified their discontent. Thus, it was true that the *Mizrachi* communities abandoned the Labor Party in increasing numbers from the beginning of the 1960s due partly to the growth of this perceived sense of discrimination against them.

Nevertheless, it was only in 1973 and 1977, with the creation of alternatives by political entrepreneurs from the veteran parties, that it was possible for these voters to desert Labor camp in

1977, he became Defense Minister under Menachem Begin. During his term, Israel launched the Litani Operation against the PLO in south Lebanon.

⁴⁰⁶ Arian A., *Elections...*, op.cit., p. 6.

⁴⁰⁷ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Results Elections to the Ninth Knesset*, n.17, 1977.

such a large number. Indeed, the *Mizrahi* Jews did not form new political actors, but they simply transferred their loyalty to them. This is part of the explanation for the emergence of a politics of social class and ethnic group which was new to Israeli politics and which opened the era of political polarization. The 1977 elections culminated with the realignment of the electoral outcomes with the changing society by deposing the dominant party⁴⁰⁸; *Likud*'s strength increased steadily, as it was able to take use demographic and ideological forces in its favor.

3.3 *HaMahapach*

The *Knesset* Elections of 1977 are better known as *HaMahapach*⁴⁰⁹ (the revolution) because the *Likud* gained over 10% more of *Knesset* seats and 3.2% additional votes than it had in the Eighth *Knesset*; but the most stunning result was Labor's loss of 40% of its seats and 15% of voters. Observers predicted that a landslide away from *Ma'arach* was imminent⁴¹⁰, but nobody could forecast a decline of such significance: Labor decline from 51 seats (including 3 Arab seats affiliated with Labor) to 32 (if we consider 1 Arab affiliated seat, 33) was indeed a shock⁴¹¹. When the ballots were closed, what happened was that the right-wing bloc won 43 seats compared to Labor's 32 and it was clear that a new era was about to begin in Israel's political life⁴¹².

3.3.1 The political actors

Once we have seen the political and social context of the 1977 elections took place, we can now proceed in the analysis of the major actors that had a prominent role in the electoral competition, that is to say: the new Democratic Movement for Change, the Alignment, the *Likud* and the role of the religious parties, with particular attention for the National Religious Party.

⁴⁰⁸Arian A., *Were the 1973 Elections ...op.cit.*, p.157.

⁴⁰⁹A phrase coined by TV anchor Haim Yavin, when he announced the election results live on television with the words "Ladies and gentlemen: a revolution!" (*Gvirotai veRabotai: Mahapakh!*).

⁴¹⁰ The newspapers' surveys taken in the months prior to the electoral turnout indicated as follows. *Ma'ariv* – Labor 35%, *Likud* 24%, DMC 11%, Religious Parties 5%; *Yediot Ahronot* – Labor 33%, *Likud* 29%, DMC 11.

⁴¹¹Throughout the campaign, polls showed at least a 10% spread between Labor and *Likud*, to the former advantage.

⁴¹² Perez D., *The War Election and Israel's Eighth Knesset*, Middle East Journal, Spring, 1974.

3.3. 1.1 *Dash*, Democratic Movement for Change

It is important to underline that not all the voters that abandoned Labor were captured by *Likud*, but rather were conquered by a new political actor, *Dash* (*Tnu a Demokratit LeShinui*, Democratic Movement of Change). *Ma'arach*'s votes moved away from this party, determining the rise of the *Likud*, winning 11.6% of the total vote while the Alignment registering a 15% drop from 1973⁴¹³.

The Democratic Movement of Change (DMC) performed very well, considering that it was established a few months before the elections by a coalition of hawks and doves, nationalists, conservatives and liberals, all demanding for change within the political scenario and of the system they believed responsible for an unwholesome environment.

DMC was formed by Yigal Yadin, IDF's chief of staff in 1948. He criticized party bickering, increasing bureaucratization and growing signs of corruption in political life; moreover, he was also openly expressing similar dissatisfaction about the conduction of 1973 war. This group merged with *Shinui* (change), led by university law professor Amnon Rubinstein, one of the protest groups emerged after the October War; the common denominator of all those groups was their slogans focused on political change, efficient government, clean hands and electoral reform. These issues found a common cause in the discontent of former generals, ranking government officials, professors, intellectuals of diverse political and social orientations, but also several members of the very same Labor establishment.

The party's platform⁴¹⁴ placed emphasis mainly on electoral reform, advocating a system made by several electoral districts, that would have replaced the model based on a single national constituency. On other issues, including peace, Israeli policy in the Occupied Territories and economic problems there were few major differences between DMC and Labor's platform. Their vision for a peace plan called for an Israeli security border along the Jordan river and in the areas west to the river, essential for Israel's defense; no withdrawal from the West Bank unless as integral part of a fully treaty; opposition to a sovereign separate Palestinian State west of the river; establishment of only one Arab state as Israel's neighbor in the east "whose capital shall be in the East of the Jordan River" and the capital of Israel in a unified Jerusalem. Considering the relatively insignificant differences between *Dash* and *Ma'arach* on issues of greatest concern for the electorate, the element which allowed this new group to succeed in winning 15 seats in the parliament and thus becoming Israel's third largest party, was undoubtedly its call for electoral reform. In general, the Democratic Movement for Change adopted an evasive and noncommittal vision, in order not to break the political heterogeneous composition of its movement which included hawks and doves,

⁴¹³Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op.cit. p. 253.

⁴¹⁴ The Israel Democracy Institute, *Dash Party Platform* (Heb.), Parties and Elections: 1977, <https://en.idi.org.il/israeli-elections-and-parties/elections>.

religious and non-religious and, to some extent, was exactly this strategy that made possible to assume the traditional model of a center political group.

3.3.1.2 *Ma'arach* and the missed opportunity for internal reform

The scope of *Mifleget Ha'Avoda's* breakdown revealed also disaffection among its most loyal voters belonging to Labor affiliated organizations, which was indicated by a defection of some 20% *kibbutz* voters in favour of *Dash*. Even if their total constitutes about 3% of the electorate. Indeed, *kibbutzim* support was considered as the backbone of Labor movement, providing the foundations from which Socialist Zionism reached out to achieve a national constituency⁴¹⁵. On the other hand, we can also notice how fragmentation among Alignment's ranks found expression through vote defections or the creation of new parliamentary groups other than DMC, such as for example *Shelli* (*Shalom leYisrael*, Peace to Israel) or *Hofesh* (Freedom), not only among the disappointed voters but also among ex-élite personalities.

Fractionalization might have been predicted along with the disappearance of the traditional leadership following the 1973 War; not only the party's organization and its leadership were in transition, but the electorate too was being transformed: a younger generation of Israelis was becoming able to vote and *Mizrachim*⁴¹⁶ were becoming more awareness about their role in Israeli political life. Those two sectors of the population were not tied with Labor movement with the sentiment that could bound many veterans to the establishment and its institutions⁴¹⁷.

After the War of October and after the creation of the Alignment in 1969, the traditional ideological differences between *Mapai*, *Ahdut Ha'Avodah*, *Rafi* and *Mapam* had greatly dissipated; this was one the major element that allowed Rabin, the first non-*Mapai* premier in Israel political history, to become prime minister in 1973. During the years of Rabin's administration (1973-1977) both government and party were managed by a triumvirate, including the premier, the defense minister Shimon Peres from *Rafi* and foreign minister Yigal Allon of *Ahdut Ha'Avodah*.

These top personalities represented each one a faction of the broad coalition forming the Alignment, each of them with diverse and often conflicting perspectives about the territorial and peace compromise. For Peres the West Bank was an integral part of *Eretz Yisrael*, which thus should be opened to Jewish settlement (although he was inclined to returning part of the occupied areas);

⁴¹⁵Jerusalem Post, May 17th 1977.

⁴¹⁶ Immigrants and Israelis from Asia or Africa were 43% of the Jewish vote and those with European or American origins, 52%.

⁴¹⁷*Ma'ariv*, March 31th 1977, p. 17.

Allon and Eban, second and third respectively on the Alignment list, were instead much more willing to discuss peace in terms of a settlement to include substantial Israel withdrawals⁴¹⁸.

The conditions that affected the *Ma'arach* on the eve of the elections are useful also to understand the reasons of the incapacity of the Alignment to project a significant and effective electoral campaign. Indeed, the strategy that was approved didn't help the Labor camp improving its image in front of the public; Chaim Bar-Lev was the campaign manager and, like Rabin, was a former general of IDF⁴¹⁹ with minimal experience of party politics and therefore he lacked the party organizational skills required during an election campaign. The chosen tone of the campaign was really unfitting the political climate, because it was all focused on the arrogant assumptions that Alignment knew what was best for Israel, thus failing to respond to the concerns of the electorate about the unsatisfying performances of the Labor leadership manifested since the Yom Kippur War.

As we have already seen in the previous sections, the Alignment was seriously in disarray by a series of political economic and psychological circumstances; it failed to present itself in front of the electorate with a clear-cut alternatives policy⁴²⁰ to those of *Likud* and DMC. The party lack of direction was summed up by un-apologetic advertisement that appeared one day before elections: «Even a responsible government can err, but to elect an irresponsible government would be a great error⁴²¹». When *Mapam* tried to change and correct the contents of the electoral campaign, it was already too late to erase the impression that have become entrenched in the mind of the public in the course of the last few years⁴²²: that, in terms of ideology, there was no such fundamental difference between the *Ma'arach* and its rivals and that there was no possibility to heal the Labor party from the degree of corruption and mismanagement that characterized its ruling epoch.

Lastly, it is useful to underline how the decision to hold the elections of *Histadrut* after the *Knesset* elections impacted on the final results: moving the *Histadrut*'s electoral turnout a month after the

⁴¹⁸ Their opinion was based on the Allon Plan (seen in the previous Chapter 2).

⁴¹⁹ During the June 1967 Six-Day War he served as the Deputy Chief of Staff in the IDF. In late 1968 he built a high sand-dune wall with a line of fixed fortifications along the east bank of the Suez Canal. This became known as the Bar-Lev Line. During the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, although retired from the IDF and serving as the Minister of Trade and Industry, he was recalled by Prime Minister Golda Meir back into military service and he played a pivotal role in the war. Between 1977 and 1984 he served as General Secretary of the *Mifleget Ha'Avoda*, the largest faction in the *Ma'arach*.

⁴²⁰ The Israel Democracy Institute, *Ma'arach Party Platform* (Heb.), op.cit.

⁴²¹ *Ibidem*

⁴²² Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op.cit. p. 324.

parliamentary one, removed the possibility of withstanding such protest votes in an organization where the Alignment could bear them and still retain power⁴²³.

In conclusion, *Miflagat Ha'avoda* failed to socialize a new generation of supporters and leaders, to maintain responsive party institutions, truly to integrate the *Mizrachi* Jews, to keep its historic coalition partnership with *Mafdal*, to prevent the main nationalist opposition to gain legitimacy and to prevent (or resolve) the crisis of identity that emerged in the late Sixties and the mid-Seventies.

3.3.1.3 *Likud*, a new candidate for political dominance

The opposite challenging force, *Likud*, was also a product of a process of splits and mergers among diverse political factions. It was formed in 1973 by different parties: *Gahal*⁴²⁴, the Free Center (*HaMerkaz HaHofshi*), the National List (*Reshima Mamlakhtit*⁴²⁵) and the National Movement for Greater Israel⁴²⁶ (*HaTenu'a Lema'an Eretz Yisrael HaSheleima*, also called Land of Israel Movement). The core of *Likud* was *Herut* a rightist and nationalist party led by Menachem Begin, whose program emphasized that the Jewish state was the whole historical Palestine, considering the partition of Western Palestine in 1948 as unjust.

After 1965, *Herut* (when it joined Israel Liberal Party in order to form the *Gahal*, *Gush Herut-Liberalim*⁴²⁷), it maintained its role as major opposition party in Israel, obtaining 26 seats in 1965 and 1969; the performance of the right-wing blocks improved with *Likud* of 7 seats (for a total of 39 in 1973⁴²⁸). It is useful to underline the fact that *Herut* functioned as the strongest component in both these formations and that before the creation of these wider groups, *Herut's* main goal was the creation of a Jewish State on both sides of the Jordan River, including Israel, Judea and Samaria and the Hashemite King of Jordan. This vision was inherited from the revisionist program of Vladimir

⁴²³ Lochery N., *The Israeli Labor Party: in the Shadow of the Likud*, Ithaca Press, 1997.

⁴²⁴ This party born in 1965 from the merger between *Herut* and the Israel Liberal Party (*Miflaga Libralit Yisraelit*), the very ancestor of today *Likud*.

⁴²⁵ This party was formed by politicians who belonged to *Rafi*, the party founded by Ben-Gurion in 1965. When in 1968 *Miflet Ha'Avoda* was formed also with *Rafi's* participation, this group decided to secede and to form an independent parliamentary formation, until its adherence in *Likud*.

⁴²⁶ Political organisation in Israel formed in 1967, which subscribed to an ideology of Greater Israel.

⁴²⁷ The alliance brought together the only two right-wing parties in the *Knesset*, each with 17 seats at the time. The *Gahal* platform largely incorporated *Herut's* approach to security and foreign affairs and the Liberal Party's approach to economics and finance.

⁴²⁸ Arian A., *Elections...*, op.cit., p. 41.

Jabotinsky⁴²⁹, whose territorial aspirations were incompatible with those liberals which came from the General Zionist movement⁴³⁰.

After the merge, *Likud* then adopted a “diluted” version of its previous foreign policy calling for «Israeli sovereignty between the Jordan and the sea. [...] Settlements in all parts in all part of the Land of Israel, without uprooting anyone from his Land and enactment of Israeli law over all the territory of *Eretz Yisrael* (including West Bank and Gaza). Arabs in *Eretz Yisrael* who desire citizenship and promise loyalty to Israel will be granted equal rights⁴³¹».

Economic and social politics were the links that have held *Herut* and the Liberals together rather than foreign and security issues: lacking Begin’s charisma, the Liberals provided the basic social orientation for the *Gahal* bloc, representing interests of Israel Manufacturer Association and of the small private sector in agriculture. Basically, they opposed the *Histadrut* apparatus and the special privileges that its affiliated organizations through its historical institutional ties with the Labor governments.

So, on social and economic issues, *Herut* remained essentially faithful to the classic tenets of Revisionism: national solidarity, improvement of the opportunities for private enterprise, opposition to proliferation of bureaucracy, reduction of state directed paternalism and containment of preferential tax treatment for collective and *Histadrut*⁴³² owned enterprises. This socially conscious attitude increased popularity among workers and the socially disadvantaged; safeguarding the social and economic needs of these groups became an important part of its program. *Herut* voters came from working class elements and among people motivated by strong nationalist feelings (with East European or *Sephardi* origins), thus, gradually *Herut* gained popularity among newly immigrated and second-generation Jews from Arab countries. and this affiliation made it to become Israel’s second largest party since 1955.

Likud was also bolstered by the messianic and territorial aspirations of *Mafdal* and other groups who were intent on settling Judea and Samaria, which they regarded as a religious duty. Because of this emphasis the party acquired the character of being interesting mainly in foreign affairs with a strongly activist policy; moreover, without being a religious party in the strict meaning of the term, *Herut* had a positive attitude towards Jewish religious traditions therefore it was supported by Orthodox circles, moreover the party esteemed religion as a bond between the People and the Land of Israel, because it contained the very pronounced assertion of the Jewish character and destiny in

⁴²⁹ The Revisionist ideology created by Jabotinsky has been explained in chapter 1, in order to highlight the divergent point of views from the main current of Zionism thought, that was Labor and Socialist Zionism.

⁴³⁰ As we seen previously, the split within the World Zionist Organization took place in the 1930s.

⁴³¹ Peretz D., *The Earthquake* ...op.cit., p.258.

⁴³² Arian A., *Elections*..., op.cit., p.42.

the Holy Land. Despite this strong connection with Judaism *Herut* (and then *Likud*) was a secular party, which took characteristics of traditional religion that provide principles and moral basis to the national claim⁴³³.

One of the main reasons for *Likud* growing popularity was the public dissatisfaction with the deficiencies of Labor-led government; in particular IDF's unpreparedness at the beginning of the Yom Kippur War was a major factor of this dissatisfaction but it was far from being the only factor. Furthermore, people were impatient with the mounting waves of labor protest, corruption and crime, as well with the government's incapability of dealing effectively with the problems of the day. Lastly, concernign to foreign policy, the Alignment government seemed too dovish, to proponents of stronger positions and too hawkish to those more inclined towards compromise. Moreover, religious circles regarded it as too secular, secularists as too prone to give in to the orthodox: there was a general dissatisfaction with the government.

Likud took advantage of all this criticism regarding the mismanagement and the corruption of *Ma'arach* its main slogans for the electoral campaign. In this way *Likud* portrayed Labor as a decaying party, one that could not be trusted with the nation's security: *Miflagat Ha'avoda's* claims to be strong, vigilant and peace-seeking were mocked. The message was clear and was predicted on public shock and sensitivity after the shock of the October War: «For peace not surrender, vote *Likud*⁴³⁴». *Ma'arach* could not project such a focused approach because it had to explain mistakes in the war and to account for its inability both to reform itself and to relate to lower-income strata which should have constituted a natural source of support.

In general, *Likud* didn't offer any stunning originality in its electoral campaign, rather it repeated the old principles of the Israeli right⁴³⁵, such as: opposition to any territorial partition regarding Judea and Samaria, free Jewish settlements activities all over the West Bank, electoral reform, abolishment of proportional representation, depoliticization more exactly desocialization of the *Histadrut* and (above) all Begin to power. In general, the *leitmotiv* (in common with *Dash*) during the campaign was that the Labor movement had been running the country for 29 years and it would have been a good thing for Israel if the *Ma'arach* was about to take a four-years break and this argument seemed to have been convincing enough to Israelis, who voted in order to break Labor political monopoly.

⁴³³*Ibidem*, p. 43.

⁴³⁴ Shindler C., *Israel, Likud...*, op.cit., p.76.

⁴³⁵ The Israel Democracy Institute, *Likud Party Platform* (Heb.), op.cit.

3.3.1.4 *Ma'afdal*, the pivotal force

Both tradition and experience have always made one or more of the religious parties, junior partners in most government coalitions led by Labor camp since the establishment of the State of Israel. Until displaced by DMC as the third largest party in 1977, they held the balance of power; but in that year the National Religious Party (NRP) increased its strength just from 10 to 12 *Knesset* seats, 3 less compared to the Democratic Movement for Change's performance⁴³⁶. Despite this apparent loss of influence, the elections for the ninth *Knesset* were the turning point that decreed the shift of the religious bloc (composed by NRP and *Agudat Yisrael*) away from the Alignment, becoming reliable partners for *Likud*. This change of position was possible not only thanks to a good performance of this latter and to Labor's decline, but also for the ideological distance that was created between the NRP (most of all) and the *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* itself after the 1967 War.

Indeed, the conquest of the Territories reopened a harsh debate inside Zionism, awakening messianic feelings and territorial aspirations that were dormant throughout Israeli society. What happened was that the dominant and younger faction of the NRP became strongly influenced by the newborn *Gush Emunim* and they started to pressure their leadership to move the party closer to groups inside the *Knesset* that could support better their vision. *Likud* and Begin were the supporters of the *Eretz Yisrael* concept that better suited to the national-religious sentiment of the NRP. The success of Begin's party was also possible thanks to the *Gush Emunim* and to the members of the National Religious Party who naturally amplified *Likud's* platform demands to hold western Palestine under Israel's control; moreover the movement was able to recruit and to channel the political fervor of Orthodox Jews close to the NRP, which was influenced by his younger members into taking a position largely identical to that of the *Gush Emunim* and to opt for a formation of a parliamentary alliance with the right-wing parties, instead of the historical Labor partner⁴³⁷.

Indeed, their insistence on establishing Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria led, if not to direct confrontation, to friction with Labor governments since the 1967 War; settlements built by *Gush Emunim* without official permission were major embarrassments to Rabin, because failure to deal decisively with it was a continuous reminder of his government's indecisiveness on the West Bank and on many other issues. Moreover we don't have to forget that the occasion to the religious parties to break the historical alliance with Labor was given by Rabin himself (in 1973) after the NRP's refusal to support the government in a parliamentary vote of non-confidence. After this episode any new prime minister will have kept in mind that disagreement with his religious colleague in the cabinet could be the cause for the dissolution of the government itself. For this reason, since the Ninth

⁴³⁶ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Results...*, op.cit.

⁴³⁷ Arian A., *Elections...*, op.cit., p. 45.

Knesset, the relatively strong position of the religious groups meant also a new relationship between state and religion.

3.3.2 The electoral results: a social and political analysis

On May 17th 1977, 1.771.726 votes were cast with a turnout of 79.2%. The most significant factors in the results were, first that *Miflet Ha'Avoda* lost its pivotal position in the coalition building process and second that *Likud* was able to put together a winning coalition without support of centrist or leftist parties. The biggest loser of the 1977 elections was of course the Alignment, who lost a third of its support since 1973 when it received 39.6% of the votes, compared with 24.6% in 1977. The *Likud* gained, but less than what Labor lost. Indeed, it improved on its 1973 vote (30.2%) in 1977 by one-tenth, 33.4%⁴³⁸.

Of great importance for the *Likud* was the shift made by the religious parties away from Labor towards the right wing of the *Knesset*, after what Peres's disappointed supporters sarcastically term the "smart exercise"⁴³⁹ of 1976, when Rabin broke the historical partnership with religious parties⁴⁴⁰. Actually, this trend started well before the 1976 split, with the radicalization of the National Religious Party after the Six Days War; indeed, since then onwards the change was both ideological and generational, with the younger generation (especially of NRP) proving more militant and messianic supporters of *Eretz Yisrael*. Consequently, they moved into the *Likud* camp along with other religious parties, thus providing the rightist camp with an inbuilt blocking majority for the rest of the 1970s and for much of the 1980s.

The performance of *Likud* in increasing its number of seats from 39 to 43 was impressive; the elections marked a momentous change, provoking a move away from Labor Zionism towards a more nationalistic interpretation of it, expressed by *Likud* and religious parties⁴⁴¹. It represented the ascendancy of bloc politics over simple party politics with the smaller parties lining up behind one of the two major parties (Labor and *Likud*) to form political blocs and potential coalition partners. In 1977 elections, the Alignment underwent its largest loss of seats ever experienced in any other election, losing support on two fronts: the first one in favor of DMC in traditional Labor middle-class strongholds and second in favor of *Likud* among the key groups of low-income ethnic and young voters.

⁴³⁸ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Results...*, op.cit.

⁴³⁹ They view this "smart exercise" as one of the fundamental reasons that allowed *Likud* to gain and maintain political dominance for fifteen years.

⁴⁴⁰ In truth this trend started well before 1976 split, with the radicalization of the National Religious Party after the Six Days War.

⁴⁴¹ Lochery N., *The Israeli Labor Party...*, op. cit., p.89.

The shift away from the Alignment was uneven; indeed some groups moved to the *Likud*, others went to the DMC: these crystallizing of the electorate made the 1977 election significant for the future of Israeli politics for the catcher of nature of the Labor party was diminishing the upper middle-class voters of Western European and American extraction and high levels of educated flocked to the DMC, instead many lower class workers with oriental background joined their causes and constituted the major bulk of *Likud* supporters. After the election about 50% of the *Likud* voters and 60% of the DMC voters in the sample said that the major factor in their voting decision was that they distrusted a government headed by the Alignment; 40% of the DMC voters and 50% of the *Likud* gave a positive reason for their vote: trust in the leadership of the party they voted for⁴⁴². In general, between 1973 and 1977 one-half of electorate switched its vote in 1977; among those who supported the Labor camp in 1973, less than a half voted for the Alignment again in 1977, while 20% of them went to the *Likud* and 18% voted for *Dash*. Among those who did not vote in 1973, 40% gave *Likud* their vote in 1977 and 16% voted for *Dash*.

When asked by *Ma'ariv* daily newspaper to select three issues from a list of twwnty which they felt could most affected the outcome of the elections, respondents gave the following ratings 1- inflation (34%), 2- peace negotiations (30%), 3- standard of living (26%), 4- administrative corruption (22%), 5- tax burden (22%), 6- political leadership (21%), 7- economic gap between *Ashkenazim* and *Mizrachim* (17%), 8- policy in the "administrated areas" in the West Bank and Gaza (16%)⁴⁴³. Many voters seemed to ballot against Labor rather than for anything in particular⁴⁴⁴; this could be demonstrated by a poll that the same newspaper (*Ma'ariv*) took in March 1977, asking "Do you have faith in the Rabin-led government and do you rely on its work over the past two and a half years?". The results showed that only the 28% responded yes without reservation (compared to the 58% of "yeses" to this question regarding Golda Meir in 1973). On the other hand, 53% found Prime Minister Rabin statisfatory in defense and foreign policy, compared to the 29% backing Labor's attitudes in these areas in December 1973⁴⁴⁵.

Ma'ariv analysis of voters' characteristics showed that half were over 30 and half between 19 and 29. Among the younger voters 28% supported *Likud* compared to only 25% who would vote for Labor camp; instead among the electorate over 50, 33% supported the Alignment, compared to 16% for the *Likud*, demonstrating that support for *Ma'arach* rose and for *Likud* with the rise in age. Polls showed stronger support for *Likud* among Oriental Jews with Europeans and Americans backing Labor; Jews

⁴⁴² Arian A., *Elections...*, op.cit., p. 256.

⁴⁴³ *Ma'ariv*, March 28th 1977, p.17.

⁴⁴⁴ Peretz D., *The Earthquake – Israel's Ninth Knesset Elections*, *The Middle East Journal*, vol.31, n.3, Summer 1977, p.253.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibidem*

arrived before 1948, of whom 85% were Europeans gave far greater support to Labor⁴⁴⁶. Since 1948 those who were most *Mizrahi* Jews, whose socio-economic status was lower and worse than the Ashkenazi one; with the time passing by the immigrants with oriental origins found themselves more inclined towards *Likud*: by 1977 ethnicity and status were reflected in voting patterns.

Even if the social gap was recognized by the voters as one of the ten most important problems, it still did not politicize the *Mizrachim* into significant groupings of their own⁴⁴⁷; indeed, all parties gave them priority in their platforms but actually placed few Oriental Jews among the lead positions on their lists. Attempts by young immigrants from Iraq and Morocco to rally *Mizrachim* in the Israel Black Panthers⁴⁴⁸ (*HaPanterim HaShhorim*) during the 1960s stimulated wide debate but were short lived and ineffective to give any factual political representation.

By 1977 the Black Panthers were factionalized into at least three or four competing groups, such as *Hofesh*, *Zionist Panthers* and *Shelli*. Given *Mizrachim*'s real social and economic problems against a background of cultural and ethnic tensions, the very obstacle to success for the Black Panthers' experience was the divisiveness inside the group, where personal competition prevailed on

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibidem*

⁴⁴⁷ The arrival but, most of all, the absorption of Oriental Jews gave birth to a series of inequalities (economic and social) between these new-comers and the *Ashkenazi* population who already was settled in Israel; the attempt to create a single national culture has brought to some form of discrimination, heavily suffered by *Mizrachim*, coming from an opposite cultural environment.

Those are the themes that paved the way for a wider reflection about the relation between Israeli society and his citizens, whose ethnicity can defined as Arab. This debate is one of the most important inside Israeli academy but it will not be analyzed in this context. This was a choice made in order to focus the discourse of this chapter more on the political attitudes and voting behavior of those people, rather than on the academic research who is currently debating about correlated sociological dynamics. For a more in-depth reading, see Khazzoom A., *The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish Identity, Stigma Management, and Ethnic Exclusion in Israel*, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 4, n.68, 2003, 481-510 and the debate about the terms "ethnic democracy" formulated by Sammy Smooha, *Ethnic democracy: Israel as an archetype*, *Israel Studies*, vol.2, n.2,1997, pp.198-241; Yiftachel O., *Debate: The concept of "ethnic democracy" and its applicability to the case of Israel*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.15, [Issue 1](#), 1992, 125-136; Yiftachel O., *"Ethnocracy" and Its Discontents: Minorities, Protests, and the Israeli Polity*, *Critical Inquiry* 26, n. 4, Summer, 2000, pp. 725-756.

⁴⁴⁸ It was an Israeli protest movement of second-generation Jewish immigrants from North Africa and Middle Eastern countries. It was one of the first organizations in Israel with the mission of working for social justice for *Sephardi* and *Mizrahi* Jews. The movement began early in 1971 in the Musrara neighborhood of Jerusalem, in reaction to discrimination against *Mizrahi* Jews, which it considered to have existed since the establishment of the state. The Black Panthers felt that this discrimination could be seen in the different attitude of the *Ashkenazi* establishment. On May 18th 1971, during the "Night of the Panthers", between 5,000 and 7,000 demonstrators gathered in Zion Square in Jerusalem in order to protest against racial discrimination.

ideological and tactical disagreement, facilitating the ability of the largest parties to co-opt leaders of the *Mizrahi* communities. While they had yet to demonstrate their ability to provide a national political leadership, instead they proved to have become dramatically powerful in local politics, to be able to cast their vote as a cohesive group and to represent a relevant political power, which radically re-shaped the national political scene⁴⁴⁹.

This dynamic was confirmed by the analysis of voting patterns in cities and sub-district in terms of socio-economic characteristic of those areas revealed that party vote and social class⁴⁵⁰ are related: relatively low socio-economic districts and those with a high percentage of citizens born in Asia and Africa generated higher levels of support for *Likud* than in the previous elections. In districts with relatively high socio-economic class structure and a large proportion of European background, the Alignment either held its ground. The *Likud* was particularly successful in areas where the disadvantages strata were largely concentrated; all this indicated that a large part of Israel working class, especially the lower income-groups switched their vote in favor of *Likud* for the first time in Israeli. After almost two decades of socialist Labor hegemony, the entire population had to deal with the shock of seeing the *Ma'arach's* presence in the *Knesset* increasingly reduced; hardly anyone was able to foresee *Likud's* emergence as the strongest party enabling it to form a government without either Alignment or *Dash*. The President of the State charged Begin to form the new government and, after hard bargaining, he succeeded in ensuring sufficient parliamentary support for his coalition consisting of *Likud*, *Mafdal*, *Agudat Yisrael* and Moshe Dayan; *Ma'arach*, after having rejected Begin's offer to join a national unity government, went into opposition for the first time since the foundation of the State of Israel.

3.3.2.1 The final political outcome: Labor at the opposition

Peres believed that «Corruption hurt us at most⁴⁵¹», but the salient fact was that Labor had steadily declined as a political force in Israel. This phenomenon was taking not only in Israel indeed, in those years, worldwide inflation increased unemployment and the general economic dislocation in several western countries, taking their tolls among socialist parties in Sweden, Australian and other democracies. In Israel, where these economic effects were greatly exacerbated by specific problems of spiralling defense costs, relatively low productivity of labor and 30 years rule by one party which had lost its charismatic leaders and the high elan which once characterized it. For these dynamics, loss of power was only a matter of time: «The voters punished the Alignment and we

⁴⁴⁹ Avineri S., «*Israel two Nations?*», in *Israel Social Structure and Change*, Curtis M. and Chertoff M., Transaction Books, 1973.

⁴⁵⁰ Merhav P., *Israeli Left...*, op.cit., p. 285.

⁴⁵¹ Jerusalem Post Weekly, n. 864, May 24th 1977, p.6.

deserve it. [...] Great things the party achieved [...] We allowed corruption to grow. [...] The voters were fed up with the regime's inability to gain control over the deteriorating domestic situation⁴⁵²». The gradual decline and final defeat of "workers' hegemony" in Israel cannot be fully understood and explained without taking into consideration the deep structural changes in Israeli working class, with their political implications. The Israeli Labor movement originated from, and has been mainly based upon, workers who had been motivated to immigrate and become workers by socialist Zionist ideology, and who took for granted the connection between Zionism and socialism. However, during the course of realization of the socialist-Zionist ideology, a new working class developed in urban areas of the country, mainly consisting of new immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa. The latter had no socialist-Zionist background instead, on the contrary, this new working class had been extremely vulnerable to nationalist and social demagoguery, so skillfully practice by the Israeli right.

In addition, *Ma'arach* complacency and emphasized pragmatism, as well as its failure to drawing a clear-cut demarcation line between left and right, created a vacuum which was inevitably filled by ideas and values alien to the Labor camp; the *Mizrachi* Jewish workers, as the urban and younger generations, were particularly receptive to these ideas: the argument of absence of options far too often used and abused by the establishment, gradually eroded.

The working people and younger generation finally overcame their former inhibitions and translated their protest against the establishment into voting for reactionary⁴⁵³. The challenge for *Ma'arach* in the following decades would have been the attempt to adapt itself to this structural changes and ideological-psychological development; bringing back Israeli working class and youth back to the Labor-Zionist ethos would have been accomplished through an educational and ideological offensive. Otherwise all its congresses, discussions, splits and mergers would be hanging in air unrooted in social reality.

3.4 The first Begin's government

Begin was a charismatic leader, who attracted both harsh opposition and deep admiration. His personality and his attitude towards the world have been forged by the tragic loss of his family during the Nazi holocaust.

He was marked by this experience and, for the rest of his life, he saw the world as a deeply hostile and dangerous anti-Semitic environment; from this perspective he perceived Arab hostility as an extension of the same hatred that had brought to the extermination of European Jewry, intensifying

⁴⁵² *Ibidem*

⁴⁵³ Merhav P., *The Israeli Left...*, op.cit., p.326.

his distrust towards *goyim*⁴⁵⁴ (especially towards Arab countries). It seemed that he wanted to prove with all his strengths that the world was expecting nothing but the occasion to destroy again the Jewish people and how, with such a great threat, only a powerful Israeli military force could protect Jews, avoiding a second Shoah.

Begin often described his generation as the forged by "Holocaust and Redemption"⁴⁵⁵; for him and his combat fellows of the period of their militancy among the ranks of *Irgun* and of the struggle for the state, the cause-effect link between *Shoah* and the formulation of coherent principles for Israeli foreign policy was clearer, stronger and more direct than any other Israeli political group⁴⁵⁶.

The prime minister thought that *Tsahal*'s main function was not "to fight a war", but to deter Arab armies from doing it; in this perspective he chose the members of the executive, satisfied with the idea that the sole composition of the Cabinet could discourage Arab enemies from attacking Israel. Begin said to his advisers: «The Arabs won't start a war against us if military leaders like Dayan, Weizmann and Sharon are sitting together in the government⁴⁵⁷». Indeed, the most important decision taken by Begin during the bargaining period of the government coalition was to offer the Foreign Ministry to Moshe Dayan (who accepted the offer as long as the government wouldn't have extended Israeli sovereignty over the Territories conquered in the Six-Day War).

One of the reasons that motivated Begin to offer such an important role to a prominent political figure, who belonged to Labor ranks, was the need to emphasize the continuity of Israeli foreign policy; the premier was well aware that out of Israel was perceived as a fanatic, extremist, warlike and he also knew that his rise to power could create the fear of possible tensions between Israel and his neighbors, so he tried immediately to provide a reliable and reasonable of himself, since the very beginning of his mandate. Then, on June 20, 1977, he presented his government to the *Knesset*, obtaining a vote of confidence with a majority of 63 votes against 53. Trying to obtain some credit for his good intentions, once reaffirmed the ideological commitment of his government to *Eretz Yisrael*'s vision, he clarified that there was no plan for the immediate annexation of the West Bank or the Gaza Strip⁴⁵⁸.

Likud's victory in 1977 was not just an electoral revolution for Israeli politics, but it was also a watershed regarding the relations between Israel and the Arab world, especially about the way to manage the issue of the Occupied Territories; the fundamental difference between Labor and *Likud* foreign policy can be found in the fact that the first one was more pragmatic, while the latter had

⁴⁵⁴ Term that is used to indicate people who are not of Jewish origins.

⁴⁵⁵ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro...*, op.cit., p.396.

⁴⁵⁶ Peleg I., *Begin's foreign policy, 1977-1983: Israel's move to the right*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1987, p.66.

⁴⁵⁷ Ben Elissar E., *No more war* (Heb), *Ma'ariv*, 1995, p.25.

⁴⁵⁸ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro...*, op.cit., p.397.

stronger ideological guiding-lines. In fact, *Ma'arach's* policy towards the Territories was animated mainly by considerations about security, while the rightist approach was oriented by ideological considerations; the remarking of this aspect is not to be intended as qualitative judgement, rather a way to emphasize the diversity of the priorities between the two political factions. Indeed, in Begin's attitude towards the territorial question was mainly defined by *Eretz Yisrael's* principle, while inside the Labor camp the debate was wider and more oriented by pragmatic arguments (even if also among its ranks were present supporters of the maximalist territorialist current).

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The integrity of the homeland (*Shlemut HaMoledet*) was an indispensable concept for *Likud*, as it was openly declared in its political platform for 1977 elections: «[...] The Jewish people's right on Israel's Land is eternal and is an integral part of his right to security and peace. Judea and Samaria must not therefore be abandoned to foreign domination. Between the sea and the Jordan river there will only exist a Jewish sovereignty and any plan for the transfer of parts of the western territory of *Eretz Yisrael*, which obstructs our right to the Land of Israel, would inevitably lead to the creation of a Palestinian state and it would undermine the security of the civilian population, endangering the existence of the State of Israel ⁴⁵⁹».

3.4.1 The Camp David Accords

Despite the attacks on him and the fear he aroused in the world media, Begin's moderateness and courtesy were a pleasant surprise, but what mainly worked in his favour was the peace process; the prime minister did not believe in partial agreement with Arab states and he vehemently opposed the interim agreements tactic proposed by Rabin; rather he wanted a historic breakthrough, that to say a peace agreement with the biggest, most important Arab state: Egypt. Hints that he was willing

⁴⁵⁹Shindler C., *Israel, Likud...*, op.cit., p. 85.

to compromise on territories can be detected in the platform he dictated to his party in January 1977, where he expressed his before his intentions to compromise on Sinai and Golan Heights, asserting that the west of the river Jordan there would be no foreign rule, but rather autonomy for Arab inhabitants. Moreover, at his first meeting with the American President Carter, Menachem Begin said that he accepted UN Security Council Resolution 242⁴⁶⁰ (to which his opposition in 1970 had called his resignation from Golda Meir government).

Since that moment, he initiated a series of meeting whose cumulative effects led to the greatest surprise of the century: Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. In November 1977 the Egyptian president addressed to his Parliament saying some short sentences regarding negotiations with Israelis: «I am willing to go to the ends of the earth for peace, even you their house, the *Knesset* and talk to them. We have no time to waste⁴⁶¹». Begin understood the evolutionary significance of that statement answering back: «I will gladly meet with Sadat anywhere, even in Cairo, and should he want to come here he will be welcomed⁴⁶²». The two protagonists in this performance were aware of the effect of its symbolism, the importance of gestures, the groundbreaking nature of their moves and the power of their psychological influence; Sadat believed in the need to break down the psychological barriers of the Israelis' lack of trust in Egypt and his visit to Jerusalem and appearance in the *Knesset* were aimed at eliminating that barrier⁴⁶³.

Meanwhile the Israelis could not believe their eyes: the man who symbolized "not one inch", absolute refusal to compromise, had invited Sadat to Jerusalem. prime minister's popularity soared when, on November 19th 1977, Sadat's plane landed in Israel; the entire country was in front of the television watching the incredibles scene of the Egyptian president plane touching down in Lod. The aircraft's door opened and the Egyptian delegation began descending the steps; last to appear was President Sadat, welcomed and escorted by Begin, down the red carpet. When the Egyptian President met former prime minister Golda Meir, he said: «I wanted to meet you for a long time», «But you never came», she answered him back. «Here i am», he replied⁴⁶⁴. The citizens of Israel were euphoric, if Sadat wanted to persuade them of his peaceful intentions, he had won them over in a single gesture. The most awaited event of this visit was Sadat's speech at the *Knesset*; he spoke in

⁴⁶⁰ It was adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council on November 22nd 1967, in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. The text refers to the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East in which every State in the area can live in security" and it includes the application of the principle regarding the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict.

⁴⁶¹ Shilon A., *Begin: 1913-1992*, Am Oved, 2007, p.287.

⁴⁶² Shapira A., *Israel...*, op.cit., p. 368.

⁴⁶³ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p. 563.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 568.

Arabic about the past wars, the soldiers fallen and the sorrow of both countries for their dead; he knew that that was the most important issues in front of the eyes of Israelis: «We all are still crying for the consequences of four terrible wars, over the last thirty years [...]». He blamed fear and lack of mutual trust the previous failed attempts to dialogue, such as in Geneva Conference⁴⁶⁵ few years before; but now the moment was come to pursue courageously new horizons, exposing his conditions for a peace agreement: withdrawal from conquered Arab territories, self-determination for the Palestinians, and the right for every country in region to live in peace within safe borders and with appropriate international guarantees. His words seemed like an ultimatum, but just the simple fact that he was there prevailed over the tone of his speech.

Obviously, the distance between Begin and Sadat regarding these requirements came to light and it remained for the following two years, but notwithstanding this, the journey to Jerusalem was a milestone in the path of peace; a mutual understanding over the necessity for Egypt and Israel to reach a peace agreement was achieved, maybe this harmony could have been precarious, but its meaning was deep, because for the first time in Israeli history, the public opinion saw that there was an Arab leader (the most important one) ready to talk about peace and to make concessions in order to achieve it. There was someone in the Middle East to talk to. The same thing happened also in Egypt, where another psychological barrier was broken; the traditional demonization of the “Zionist enemy” was starting to be challenged by a more rationale approach, but for the rest of the Arab world, Sadat’s move was a trauma, especially for the Palestinians⁴⁶⁶.

Almost a year later, after several attempts to dialogue and reach an understanding on several critical issues, President Carter invited Prime Minister Begin and Sadat at Camp David in order to try to bridge the differences; on September 17th 1978, Egypt and Israel agreed on a peace treaty thanks to the American patronage. Once returned to their countries, the two leaders had to face harsh criticism; Sadat was accused to be a traitor, to have left alone the Palestinians and to have turned his back to the Arab cause. The difficulties were significant also in Israel; first of all, Menachem Begin had to deal with his own conscience because, not only he didn’t keep the promise not to dismantle the settlements in the Sinai, but also he created a precedent for the eventual removal of those in the West Bank. He renounced to important strategic military positions, he conceded “autonomy” to the

⁴⁶⁵ The Geneva Conference of 1973 was an attempt to negotiate a solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict as envisioned in United Nations Security Council Resolution 338 following the called-for cease-fire to end the Yom Kippur War. Henry Kissinger opened the conference, articulating his step-by-step strategy and stated that the goal of the conference was peace; the immediate need was to strengthen the cease-fire by accomplishing a disengagement of forces as the "essential first step" toward implementation of UN 242. No agreement was reached.

⁴⁶⁶ In November 22nd 1977, Arafat and Assad released a statement condemning Sadat’s initiative, declaring to be ready to use every means at their disposal in order to boycott any results and inviting the Egyptians to oppose to this betrayal.

Palestinian people (probably creating the premises for the birth of a Palestinian state) and he committed to the temporary freezing of the settlement enterprise.

Giving up the settlements went against Begin's promise according to which "One does not give away what has been built"; the voluntary surrender of settlements built by government's decision was unprecedented and, although Begin would not withdraw from Judea and Samaria⁴⁶⁷, it was clear that the withdrawal from Sinai and Rafah Approach settlements was a portent of what was to come: settlements were not sacred.

All these elements are also the reasons why the Camp David Accords were not greeted with the same enthusiasm as Sadat's visit; the treaty's opponents highlighted the concessions the leader had made, not enough their achievements. In Israel the decision to withdraw to the international border and to dismantle the settlements and airfields was received with incredulity; especially one segment of Israeli society, the most involved in the militant activities of national-religious parties, was against this decision. The threat to their settlement project was evident and they reacted immediately to it with vehement opposition to the agreements; it was the moment when Begin's close friends attacked him, overshadowing the achievements of the peace agreements and the normalization of relations with the most important of the Arab states. The *Knesset* debate on the Camp David Accords was held on March 20th-21st; it was hard and, only Begin, with his authority and standing in his party, could have compelled the majority of *Likud* members to ratify the agreement (84 votes in favour, 19 votes against and 17 abstentions⁴⁶⁸). Yet this vote obscured the fact that only two-thirds of MKs belonging to government parties actually endorsed the Camp David framework. Begin indeed depended on the 36 votes of *Miflet Ha'Avoda* and of *Dash* order to secure the ratification. On March 26th 1979, Begin and Sadat were ready to finally sign the peace agreement in Washington.

Even if Begin was able to avoid a binding commitment on the return of Judea and Samaria, by way of a strategic ambivalence, he had anyway to respond to far right's attacks: «This is the greatest turning point in Middle East, which has come with the possibility of signing peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. The anguish does not surprise me. I have no complaints about the demonstrations⁴⁶⁹». He had difficulties facing the settlers, since in his eyes they were the pure, idealistic element of the right and criticism from them, hurt him very much; indeed, his heart was still devoted to *Eretz Yisrael* and settlement enterprise. They simplistically did not perceive the course

⁴⁶⁷ The framework agreement wasn't completed and formulated into a final peace treaty because of the problems left opened: the most important of all was the linkage between the normalization of Egyptian-Israeli relations and the autonomy agreement that should have been reached with the Palestinians. Israel insisted for the removal of this linkage and for the immediate beginning of the implementation of the agreement, Egypt wanted it to be kept (due to its commitment with the Arab League).

⁴⁶⁸ Shindler C., *Israel, Likud...*, op.cit., p 98.

⁴⁶⁹ Naor A, *Begin in power: a personal testimony (Begin bashilton: edut ishit)*, Yediot Ahronot, 1993, p. 182.

of events, believing that since the premier had negotiated the return of Sinai, this implied that he would have done the same for the West Bank in the future.

The very Begin's failure at Camp David was his inability to avert the split with the nationalist camp; he had spent over two decades building a diverse coalition of the right and yet, despite, all the political theatrics, he was unable to maintain the unity of this broad spectrum of political groupings. He admitted at the signing ceremony in Washington in March 1979: « God gave me the strength to preserve, to survive the horror of Nazism and Staliinist concentration camps [...]and some other dangers. To endure [...] not to waver or to flinch from my duty. To accept abuse from foreigners and, what is more meaningful, from my own people and even my close friends. This effort too, bore some fruit⁴⁷⁰».

Despite this harsh criticism, the peace treaty with Egypt was the apogee of Begin's era, when he gained stature both at home and throughout the world, winning a Nobel Peace Prize and achieving more popularity among the Israelis. Indeed, the premier received full support from the Israeli electorate in 1981 elections, when they confirmed their trust in him and his policy, included the peace with Egypt.

⁴⁷⁰ Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Remarks by Prime Minister Begin at a festive dinner in Washington - 26 March 1979*, *Foreign Policy- Historical Documents, 1977-1979*, vol.4-5, n. 255.

Chapter 4. THE YEARS OF TRANSITION: FROM A DOMINANT *LIKUD* TO A CHALLENGING LABOR PARTY (1981-1989)

The 1980s were years characterized by many historical events that profoundly influenced Israeli society, challenging the political supremacy of *Likud* (established with the *mahapach*, its overwhelming victory in 1977 elections). In this chapter we would like to delineate the most important steps that realized the conditions for such a change within Israeli political arena and favored the process of internal revision in *HaMifletet Ha'Avoda*. The purpose of this analysis won't be the historical dissertation by itself, but a functional use of history in order to understand better the dynamics that characterized the series of events in Israeli politics.

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4.1 Menachem Begin's second government: 1981

The bombing of the Iraqi reactor Osirak⁴⁷¹ had a positive effect on the electoral performance of the *Likud* in the elections of June 30th, 1981; In fact, three months before the elections, Peres's victory seemed certain. By election polls had shown that the Alignment enjoyed a 25% advantage on the deployment of Begin, but eventually the two parties gathered around the same number of votes: the right won 48 *Knesset* seats, while the *Ha'Avoda* 47 (increasing its representation from 33 to 47 seats, but with its traditional allies losing a lot of support).

For this impossibility by Peres to form a government, the leader of the majority party, Begin, was commissioned by President Yitzhak Navon⁴⁷² to form the coalition government. He obtained the support of 61 MKs from the 48 *Likud*, *Mafdal* 7, 4 from *Agudat Yisrael* and 3 from *Tami*. For the first time in Israel's history the ruling coalition was formed only by parties belonging to the right of the political spectrum: numerically was a weak government with a narrow majority, but this lack was compensated for by the political cohesion and the ideological fervor. The composition of the

⁴⁷¹ Operation Babylon was a surprise Israeli air strike carried out on June 7th 1981, which destroyed an Iraqi nuclear reactor under construction seventeen kilometers southeast from Baghdad. It established the "Begin Doctrine", which explicitly stated the strike was not an anomaly, but instead: «A precedent for every future government in Israel». Israel's counter-proliferation preventive strike added another dimension to their existing policy of deliberate ambiguity, as it related to the nuclear capability of other states in the region.

⁴⁷² He served as the 5th President of Israel from 1978 until 1983 as a member of the center-left Alignment coalition. He was the first Israeli president to be Sephardi and born in Jerusalem,

government reflected the shift of the political center of gravity to the right; in fact, the first Begin government⁴⁷³ had seen the participation of Moshe Dayan as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ezer Weizman as Minister of Defense and Yigal Yadin as Deputy Prime Minister. These men had a moderating influence and containment on the government's policy towards the Arab world, even managing to get a significant result as the peace with Egypt, signed at Camp David in 1979.

In this second government, however, there was no longer any trace of such a moderating influence. Begin's premiership was accompanied by two important figures of the Israeli right: Yitzhak Shamir as his Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ariel Sharon in the role of Minister of Defense. With this trio in power, Israel's foreign policy was likely to become more militant, aggressive, nationalist and uncompromising. In early August, the PM presented his new government to the *Knesset*: the guidelines of government policy were net, inflexible and insisted on the right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, an eternal and indisputable right, inextricably linked to the right to security and peace. A similar approach was in sharp contradiction with the pact signed at Camp David, in fact, on that occasion, the Israeli prime minister had recognized the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and had agreed to grant full autonomy to the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza.

4.1.1 The premises of the First Lebanon War

Two main factors of the Israeli policy led to the large-scale invasion of Lebanon in June 1982: the will to forge an alliance with the Maronites⁴⁷⁴ and the desire to destroy the PLO, beginning from its expulsion from southern Lebanon. Begin supported strongly both elements of this project, indeed he had developed a strategic thinking very similar to that of his great rival David Ben-Gurion: in this vision the focus was on the interest that Israel could have in common with the non-Arab and non-Muslim countries in the region, as well as with the ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East. Within this' broader view Christians of Lebanon covered a special place as they were facing the danger of being presumably wiped out by their Arab and Muslim opponents. This condition exerted a special fascination Begin, due to the fact that the Holocaust had left its mark on him and for this reason he was used to evoke that powerful narrative through the creation of striking historical parallels with the events of his time. Therefore, in this case, the PM was determined not to repeat

⁴⁷³ On May 17th 1977 the *Likud*, headed by Begin, won the Knesset elections with 43 seats and becoming the biggest party in the parliament.

⁴⁷⁴ The Maronites are a Christian group who adhere to the Maronite Church. Their name comes from the Syriac Christian Saint Maron, whose followers migrated to the area of Mount Lebanon. The Maronite Church, under its own Patriarch of Antioch, is in full communion with the Holy See, whose papal primate recognizes it and is therefore an Eastern Particular Church of the Catholic Church.

the mistakes made during the Monaco Conference, in September 1938, in which Britain and France abandoned the fate of Czechoslovakia to Adolf Hitler. Begin felt that Israel had the moral duty to defend its Maronite allies; this aim was in accordance with the need to deal also with the PLO guerrilla, which was engaged in a continuous launching of *Katyusha*⁴⁷⁵ along the northern border. The Jewish State had then to take the initiative in order to force the Palestinian forces to move in the northern part of the country, as far as possible from the Israeli border.

But, the main designer of the invasion was Ariel Sharon, whose aims were very ambitious and far-reaching; the first objective of this plan was to destroy the Palestinian military infrastructure in Lebanon and weaken the OLP under a political point of view⁴⁷⁶; The second aim was to establish in this country a new political order, helping Christian allies led by Bashir Gemayel⁴⁷⁷ (according to the vision of Sharon, the latter would first formed a government that would then signed a peace treaty with Israel) and last, but not least, the expulsion of Syrian forces from Lebanon. Probably, Begin was not entirely aware of these ambitious geopolitical goals, but surely the two men were united by the desire to act against the Palestinian leadership in Lebanon.

The third protagonist of this enterprise was the Chief of Staff, Raful Eitan; he was an enthusiastic supporter of this vision and elaborated two versions of the operation in Lebanon: "Operation Small Pines" was directed at wiping out the Palestinian guerrillas from southern Lebanon, while the operation "Big Pines" foresaw a deeper action, up to the Beirut-Damascus highway. IDF's troops would enter into Lebanese territory by land (from the northern border) and by sea (landing on the coast near Sidon) to surround Beirut and rejoin the Christian forces. The ultimate goal was the destruction of command centers and Palestinian infrastructure throughout Lebanon, including Beirut. This maneuver far-reaching was presented for the first time in front of the Council of Ministers in December 1981; cabinet members were amazed by the radius of operation proposed action and many of them are opposed to the plan.

Eitan and Sharon decided therefore to adopt a different tactic: initially, to show a proposal to the Cabinet that was limited to the bombing of PLO targets in Lebanon and then, counting on the reaction of the Palestinian militias by launching rockets on towns in the Galilee. They hoped that, at that point, the government would have approved more drastic measures and start gradually the implementation of "Big Pines. In the meanwhile, the Ministry of Defense was going on with his diplomatic activity with the Maronites, who (however) were not a unified group, but rather divided

⁴⁷⁵ Soviet-made rocket launcher introduced during the Second World War and is generally installed on trucks.

⁴⁷⁶ The destruction of the PLO would have broken the backbone of Palestinian nationalism and so facilitated the annexation of the West Bank within the Greater Israel. The resulting movement of Palestinians from those areas would be merged in Jordan and would sweep away the Hashemite monarchy, turning the east bank of the Jordan in the Palestinian state.

⁴⁷⁷ Lebanese leader and president-elect. He was a senior member of the Phalange party and the supreme commander of the Lebanese Forces militia during the early years of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990).

into different militias led by warlords; among these: the Phalange⁴⁷⁸, founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel, entertained close ties with Israel. The relationship with the Phalangists was always considered very controversial among military experts: the Mossad had a general good opinion regarding the reliability and the military capabilities of this militia but, on the contrary, military intelligence had serious doubts on both the points. Indeed, from the very beginning the higher ranks of the IDF showed themselves cautious about the relationship with the Maronite allies and periodically exposed the weaknesses of this alliance. For example, General Yehoshua Saguy, director of military intelligence was convinced that if Gemayel was elected president, he would have sided with the Arab world, and certainly not with the Israelis. He repeatedly warned his superiors that the Maronite leader was only trying to use Israel for their own purposes, and that would not have been able to conclude a peace with the Jewish State, given the close ties between Lebanon and the Arab world⁴⁷⁹.

The so-desired *casus belli*, that Israeli hawks have been waiting for, materialized on June 3rd: the Israeli ambassador to London Shlomo Argov was seriously wounded by terrorists of the group of Abu Nidal⁴⁸⁰, a group of Palestinian terrorists. Although the Mossad had information which suggested that the attack was designed to provoke an Israeli attack in southern Lebanon, in order to destroy the power of Arafat, Begin was not interested in stopping the war machine and an emergency meeting of the Cabinet was convened the following day. The PM was visibly shaken: «Assaulting an ambassador is an attack against the state of Israel and we will answer⁴⁸¹». The ministers approved the operational plan with a heavy heart, knowing that the air strike would trigger the ground offensive in southern Lebanon.

In the early afternoon, the IAF struck the PLO targets in southern Lebanon: two hours later, the PLO artillery opened fire on the towns of the Galilee region, as expected; that evening, the Israeli cabinet

⁴⁷⁸ The Lebanese Phalanges Party (Arabic: *Ḥizb al-Katā'ib al-Lubnānīya*), better known in English as the Phalange (Arabic: *al-Katā'ib*), is a Christian Democratic political party in Lebanon. In spite of being officially secular, it is supported mainly by Maronite. The *Kataeb* party was a Maronite paramilitary youth organization, who modeled the party after Spanish and Italian Fascist parties. By the 1970s, the party had become a political giant in Lebanon, with an estimated membership of 60,000 to 70,000. The vast majority (85%) of members were Maronites, but some were members of minority Christian communities, Shiites, Druze, and Jews.

⁴⁷⁹ The majority of the officers agreed with the prediction of Saguy, that a clash with the Syrians would be inevitable that the Phalangists would remain largely passive measure and that the PLO's military machine would be defeated but not its political leadership

⁴⁸⁰ Sabri Khalil al-Banna (May 1937 – 16 August 2002), known as Abu Nidal, was the founder of Fatah - the Revolutionary Council, a militant Palestinian splinter group more commonly known as the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO). Abu Nidal ("father of struggle") formed the ANO in October 1974 after a split from Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

⁴⁸¹ Morris B., *Vittime. Storia del conflitto arabo-sionista 1881-2001*, BUR Rizzoli, 2001, p.643.

was convened and the approval of the military operations seemed a foregone conclusion. The maneuver should have taken place along the guidelines of Little Pines⁴⁸², whose explicit goal was to force the Palestinian guerrilla to retreat to the north, in order ensure the settlements in northern Israel. The PM was driven by a very clear rationale⁴⁸³: «The alternative to struggle is Treblinka, and we decided that there will be no other Treblinka⁴⁸⁴». After those events Amos Oz⁴⁸⁵ would have written an open letter to PM: “but Prime Minister Hitler died 37 years ago, Hitler does not hide a Nabatiya, Sidon or Beirut ⁴⁸⁶”

The Cabinet was gathered for an emergency meeting, which was characterized by a certain ambiguity; some maps were showed and they had big black arrows indicating clearly the suburbs of Beirut but Sharon did not speak at all to reach the Lebanese capital or to rejoin the Phalangist forces or either confronting the Syrians. Only the Minister of Communications Mordecai Zippori, a former general, argued that the operation would not have remained limited but it would have transformed into a real war: the main implication was that the clash with the Syrians would not been avoided. Zippori opposed openly against the reliability of those considerations, asking Sharon and Eytan to show on the maps where was the limit of forty kilometers for the advance. It 'interesting that Begin preferred to be vague about the distance that the army intended to cover: «One knows how a war starts, but no one knows exactly how it ends, but I declare here that nothing will happen out our control, as happened to Israel in previous conflicts. The cabinet will meet every day⁴⁸⁷ », he promised. There was no talk at all about destroying the Palestinian presence in southern Lebanon, reaching Beirut in order to join with the Lebanese Phalange and setting up a Christian, or sending home the Syrians. Sharon was very careful not to spell out that both in his opinion and in the IDF experts one, avoiding totally any clash with the Syrians seemed unlikely⁴⁸⁸. In this way the various members of

⁴⁸² The plan called for: an IDF advance into Lebanese territory along three main axes, a duration of operations extending from twenty-four to forty-eight hours, a range limit of the troops attached to forty km from the border, exclusion Beirut and its surroundings from the operation objectives and the avoidance of any showdown with the Syrians

⁴⁸³ Begin's stubbornness was reinforced by the fact that he regarded the PLO as a reincarnation of Nazism and, in this picture, Arafat was a new Hitler.

⁴⁸⁴ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro: Israele e il mondo arabo*, Il Ponte, 2013. p.449.

⁴⁸⁵ He is an Israeli writer and in addition to be the author of novels and essays, Oz is a journalist and professor of literature at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in Be'er Sheva. Since 1967 is an influential supporter of the "two-state solution". For many years Oz was identified with the Israeli Labor Party and he was close to its leader Shimon Peres. In the '90s Oz came out of the Labor Party and joined the *Meretz* party.

⁴⁸⁶ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p. 643.

⁴⁸⁷ Morris B., *Vittime...*, *ibidem*, p. 645.

⁴⁸⁸ Sharon said that this possibility could not be completely excluded, but that he intended to circumvent the Syrian troops and force them to retreat into the Beka'a Valley.

the Council of Ministers voted in favor⁴⁸⁹ of the operation, relieved by Begin's reassurances that the military maneuvers would not differ from the plan, without an explicit decision by the government. On this occasion the PM decided to change the name code of the operation in "Peace for Galilee". Eytan and Sharon's tactic worked out: they obtained the permission to enact the "Little Pines" plan but they knew well that the war would have been conducted in accordance with the "Big Pines" version (brought to the attention of the Government and rejected back in December 20th 1981⁴⁹⁰). The minister of defense, thanks to his military experience, was well aware that once the IDF had been mobilized, it would be difficult to impose political control over military actions.

4.1.2 Operation Peace for Galilee and the Siege of Beirut

July 6th 1982, Israeli armored vehicles entered in Lebanon at 11:00 am, by attacking Palestinian forces in the area and blocked their escape routes to the north, during the second day of the war the Defense Minister ordered the army to prepare to fight Syrian forces on the side Eastern and move then to the Beirut Damascus highway; in the third day he was announced to the leader of the Falange that the IDF would join his forces and that he should then prepare to conquer Beirut to form the new Lebanese government. During these early stages, the operation and Peace for Galilee enjoyed a broad national consensus (also including the Labor Front), but the situation began to get complicated when there were the first contacts with the Syrian army, which unfortunately occurred. On June 8th, the PM had informed the *Knesset*: « We are not interested in a border with Syria reached forty km our task will be finished fighting cease»⁴⁹¹; but despite the PM's public statements to reassure Damascus, Assad decided to move some batteries of surface-to-air missiles (SAM) in the Beka'a Valley; it was a defensive maneuver, which was exploited by Sharon who presented it to the members of the Cabinet as a provocative and aggressive act. The purpose was to get permission to

⁴⁸⁹ Both Eitan and Sharon declared later that the government actually had been made aware of the fact that the scope of the operation would not have been limited to 40 km, the maps were opened in front of the Cabinet and therefore there was no room for misunderstanding of what was being proposed. All these claims are contradicted by the record of the government's discussions, and the text of the decision which, however, was not published.

⁴⁹⁰ Years after Sharon admitted that the decision of the Council of Ministers of June 5, 1982 spoke only in general terms to put the Galilee out of the reach of enemy fire, but added that the political aim of the war required the destruction not only of infrastructure ' PLO in southern Lebanon but also in its headquarters in Beirut and that everyone involved knew exactly what was the meaning of the general wording of the objectives.

⁴⁹¹ Morris B., *Vittime...*, *ibidem*, p. 656.

attack Syrian positions, in order to eliminate the threat that those missiles represented⁴⁹². Moreover, the minister of defense did not inform the government about the reserves of the senior leaders of the army or of the possible repercussions of the initiative, but merely argue that Israeli troops in Lebanon were in difficulty, they were experiencing significant losses and that to correct the situation IAF was to help the ground forces, but that, to do this, it was first necessary to neutralize the Syrian network in Lebanon. As soon as the government gave the green light to the IAF attacked the SAM installations in the Beka'a Valley; the attack two hours completed on the same day, it was a stage of contemporary military history⁴⁹³: for the first time a 'Western Military Aviation fought and neutralized a complex and sophisticated anti-aircraft missile network of Soviet-made. The battle of the southern Beka'a ended the June 11th with the cease-imposed on the Jewish state by the Americans, in turn, the object of veiled but intense Soviet pressure. and after some times the Americans were able to bring into Notwithstanding the cease-fire, on June 13, the Israeli army entered the territory Phalangist thus reaching the Beirut-Damascus highway⁴⁹⁴. Many of the goals that Sharon had set were reached: the PLO was trapped inside the capital, Israeli forces were reunited with the Maronite and Syrian units had been isolated in the Beka'a Valley.

Once the IDF had reached the gates of Beirut euphoria began to dissipate and it was replaced by the sense of deep uncertainty. The second phase of the war contrasted dramatically with the first one but, more important, the government credibility and Begin's ability to conduct the operations was questioned: with the siege of Beirut, Operation Peace for Galilee had become an Arab-Israeli war. A *Modi'in Ezrachi* poll, at the end of June, indicated that 93.3% of 1236 respondents thought that the war was justified and 90.7% of all Labor voters questioned in the sample concurred⁴⁹⁵. They clearly believed that if the threat of terrorism could be lifted from them by defeating the PLO, it therefore followed that Sharon should be supported. But the Israeli public were psychologically prepared only for a short war, with minimal cost to human life; instead the opposite happened: it dragged on and on and Sharon was forced into more extreme actions, which ultimately many Jews felt unable to

⁴⁹² Each time the defense minister wanted to go beyond the limits imposed by what was approved by the government, was usually used to present a picture of the situation that would highlight what further change in the schedule of the conflict was necessary to save the lives of Israeli soldiers.

⁴⁹³ Israeli tactics used by aviation is still one of the best kept military secrets

⁴⁹⁴ Seven days of the Israeli offensive had divided Lebanon into four parts: the Syrians on the east and in the Beka'a, the Israelis in the south to Beirut, the Christians controlled the eastern part of the capital and the area surrounding it, while the PLO controlled west Beirut (surrounded by three sides by the IDF and by Christian forces).

⁴⁹⁵ Shindler C., *Israel, Likud and the Zionist dream: power, politics and ideology from Begin to Netanyahu*, I. B. Tauris, 1995, p. 130.

justify⁴⁹⁶. The tiny Minority who was unwilling to tolerate the situation thus increased dramatically with the growing realization of what was taking place and with the sense that they were not being told the truth.

Sharon's dilemma became increasingly acute as he realized that he was trapped by having no Cabinet mandate to enter Beirut; moreover, the probable heavy loss of life on the Israeli side incurred by such a step would not be tolerated by the Israeli public. So due to the fact that engaging clashes in the streets would have caused an unacceptable level of losses, then a combination of military pressure and psychological warfare was chosen as an interim measure to persuade Arafat and his companions that there was no alternative than leaving the capital. On 1st July, the seven weeks siege of West Beirut commenced: air strikes, shelling and naval artillery fire were used along with speakers and leaflets in order to create a campaign to pressure and intimidation. This approach inflicted immense suffering heavy human losses and also to the civilian population of the Lebanese capital, especially with the intensification of the siege during the next two months, in which supplies of water and electricity were cut.

This situation continued until the Reagan lost patience and joined the chorus of criticism from the international community, asking Begin an immediate halt of the bombing and threatened to review the Israeli-American relations. Israelis are very annoyed at the way in which their PM was handling the situation, the impression was that now he had lost touch with reality and was only chasing the ghosts of the past⁴⁹⁷. In the meanwhile, the US had sent their negotiator Philip Habib to persuade Arafat⁴⁹⁸ to leave but, what the diplomat found out was that the Arab countries were not at all eager to give hospitality to the militants and the Palestinian bureaucracy many of them actually had a score to settle with Arafat and considered his followers not fully controllable and potentially subversive. But, at last, Habib succeeded to mediate the terms of the withdrawal of the PLO in Tunisia in order to end the siege of the city: at last, after seventy-five days of hard fighting the Palestinian leadership along with Arafat decided to leave Beirut on August 30th.

4.1.3 The peace movement and the struggle for Israel's soul

While the siege was taking place, Sharon contradictory explanations sowed the seeds of public disillusion and also many serving soldiers began to feel that there was no purpose to the operation. There was also an opposition from most of the commanders; Colonel Eli Geva affirmed

⁴⁹⁶ The sight of a capital city been continuously shelled began to erode any political advantage that Israel had gained internationally in its crusade to get rid of terrorism.

⁴⁹⁷ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro...*, *ibidem*, p.459.

⁴⁹⁸ He didn't capitulate immediately because he knew that the longer he could hold on, the greater the sympathy for the Palestinian cause in the West increased by Sharon heavy handed tactics, which had created the best publicity for the Palestinians in living memory.

that the IDF was not prepared for such an operation either military or morally and he concluded that the honorable way to resolve his inner dilemma was to renounce the command of his brigade. The Geva Affair⁴⁹⁹ arose from an act of conscience which proved to be a turning Point in the attitude of the Israeli public to the war; his bold initiative in opposing the decision to take Western Beirut questioned the very purpose of Israeli presence there and methods which were being used to extend the war without any political accountability. Begin, Sharon and Eitan have been anxious to convince Geva. of the error of his ways because they well understood that his act would be perceived as the breakdown of the consensus that they had striven so hard to portray.

A growing number of ministers now closely monitored Sharon's political maneuvers and they started not only at detecting what have been omitted, but also at asking the right questions.

Also, Begin's behavior tended to be erratic as the war continued. As the pressure mounted on him from both inside and outside Israel, his explanations were increasingly seen to be transparent by a growing number of people. The inaccuracies and inconsistencies of PM's account gave Israeli journalist a field day, showing how his versions simply did not fit the known facts.

Opinion polls indicated that the population has been carried away by a display of national fervor and wishful thinking about their Palestinian adversaries, it was also clear that many were not receiving objective information that would allow them to form an opinion contrary to that of the government's aims. There was not even an awareness that existed a partial information vacuum also due to the fact that the *Likud* leadership has never been warm towards the media⁵⁰⁰. Moreover, Sharon did not give any direct briefings throughout the course of the war, also in order to tailor the fact to fit his version of events for the Cabinet⁵⁰¹. Therefore, the Minister of Defense was keen to ensure that no overt opposition to his presentation of the war should be transmitted through the media: objective reporting should not contradict the government's version of the events and such an approach was easily camouflaged under the blanket of national Security. Israeli dissemination of information was uncoordinated and situation exacerbated by the fact that the Cabinet was often still unaware of Sharon's latest tactic; for this reason, a young member of the *Knesset*, Ehud Olmert⁵⁰², was proposed as coordinator of information with the rank of deputy minister: he tried to show that the march on Beirut was a consequence of events rather than a specific aim but his eloquence was

⁴⁹⁹ *Israel, Likud...*, ibidem, p. 131.

⁵⁰⁰ Since 1949, the editors of the Israeli press had periodic meetings with state leaders, but with the advent of *Likud*, this ongoing contact changed.

⁵⁰¹ Sharon referred to the "journalistic poisons" which was demoralizing the troops. He was more interested in the presentation of positive images of the war.

⁵⁰² He is an Israeli politician and lawyer. He served as PM from 2006 to 2009 in the *Kadima* party and, before that, as a cabinet minister from 1988 to 1992 and from 2003 to 2006. Between these two periods as MKs, he was elected to be mayor of Jerusalem from 1993 to 2003.

not enough to make the public confusion fade away. This attempt simply testified the degree of deception and the desire to mould Israeli perception of the war through a deceiving communication. Notwithstanding the protest to the operation, outside *Knesset*, began on the first day of invasion of Lebanon⁵⁰³, it was hard for the forces in the opposition to take quickly a strong position. This was due to the fact that even if many Israeli intellectuals and academics were strongly opposed to the war (such as Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua⁵⁰⁴ and the leading Labor dove Yossi Sarid), they were not taken into consideration by the public by their political allegiance for the left and populist disdain of intelligentsia. Also, the Labor Party was living this difficult impasse, unable to delineate a common and unified position on the issue. But, in the absence of a coherent line from the Labor politicians, the movement of “*Shalom Aksciv*” (Peace Now)⁵⁰⁵ increasingly became influential in antagonizing Israeli right. So, by the end of that month when it was becoming clear that Israel was being sucked into a more complicated and more drone out scenario than act been anticipated beef snout became more active and code for a ceasefire.

On July 3rd, 100.000 people turned out to participate in a protest, which was condemned by the PM the very next day; he criticized the demonstration as being anti-democratic, but his harsh words were motivated by the fact that he didn't consider Peace Now as an autonomous organization, rather as an extension of his political enemy, *Mapam*. Perhaps Begin was unable to acknowledge the possibility of an autonomous grassroots movement on the left and the fact that demonstrations and rallies were not anymore just a prerogative of the right. For sure it served him politically to attack the Alignment, accusing them with lack of patriotism⁵⁰⁶. In addition, soldiers at the front began to write to PM with their complaints and there was a growing number of reservists who openly opposed the war: ninty-two soldiers wrote to Sharon asking him to resign, other ones went further and created organizations like “*Yesh Gvul*” (There is a limit). The members of this groups pledged not to serve in Lebanon, which effectively meant that they preferred to go to prison rather than serve in Sharon's war. Such a move, on such a scale was unprecedented in Israel, since the IDF was almost a holy institution at the heart of the nation.

⁵⁰³ For example, a Committee against the War in Lebanon was established and decided to demonstrate in its first major rally on 26th June, which attracted 20.000 people.

⁵⁰⁴ He was a leading Israeli religious thinkers and philosophers and he described government policy in Lebanon as Judeo-Nazi during a press conference in the month of June.

⁵⁰⁵ Peace Now was founded in March 1978, in an act known to the Israeli public as “The Officer's Letter”. Following the visit of Egypt's President, Anwar Sadat, to Israel, a group of three hundred and forty-eight reserve officers and soldiers from Israeli army combat units published an open letter to the Prime Minister of Israel, Menachem Begin, calling upon the government to make sure this opportunity for peace was not lost. Tens of thousands of Israelis supported the letter, and the movement was born.

⁵⁰⁶ Sharon argued that the Labor Party had broken with the tradition of Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir and Yigal Alon by following the lefties.

At that point, Begin blamed openly the Alignment, accusing twelve of its leaders to have attended a Peace Now rally; this was quite untrue and the irony was that the leadership of the Labor Party was doing its best to keep its distance from the movement. Indeed, since the beginning of the war the Labor Party has been internally split between its hawks and its doves; yet the party's leadership desperately was trying to maintain a façade of public unity and it looked for any sign of public disapproval, because of the perception that the norms of political and consensual support for the aims of a war were being challenged. Therefore, given the degree of public support for the war and the stated public aims, the Alignment had supported the government in the *Knesset* when a motion of no confidence was proposed⁵⁰⁷. But, as the government's stated aims were continually being breached and with no sign of a conclusion of the war the doves within the Labor Party started to become stronger even if, when the Siege of Beirut commenced, Peres was still backing the government. In the following days, almost in disregard of the leadership's approach, the leading Labor doves Motta Gur, Yossi Sarid and Uzi Baram started arguing that the party should take a clear stand from the *Likud*, instead of being viewed as a pale imitation of it. Such a stand annoyed the hawks and the leadership; Rabin pointed out that was not the opportune time for such a statement due to the strong public support of the war⁵⁰⁸. Notwithstanding this last consideration, the party's bureau called upon Begin to order a cessation of bombing West Beirut because it was severely damaging Israel's image as a democratic state based on humanitarian values. Together with this statement, was also requested to the members of the party not to participate in anti-war demonstrations⁵⁰⁹.

Labor divisions and its leadership's ambivalence were characterized time and again as anti patriotic by Begin⁵¹⁰; when Peres asked the PM in the *Knesset*, at the end of July, why he had not foreseen difficulties in the operation, he replied that *Gahal* had refrained from raising such questions during the Yom Kippur War: Begin repeatedly contrasted *Likud*'s loyalty during past wars, when Labor administration had been in power, with the actual lack of solidarity of the leftist camp. (referring to the stigma of the Yom Kippur War was a way to criticize Labor and to make public opinion remember of the lack of preparedness and of the unsatisfactory outcome). A contrast was drawn between patriotism and the Alignment's present ambivalence, blaming the latter for the growing

⁵⁰⁷ The defeat of that motion, 93 to 4, was indicative of the political consensus, albeit it was a shaky one. Even Shulamit Aloni, Yossi Sarid and *Mapam* (who formed the nucleus of the Peace Now movement) abstained.

⁵⁰⁸ He took this strategic position although he was disturbed by the course of the war, even to the point to declare that: «Lebanon might become Israel Vietnam».

⁵⁰⁹ Schindler C., *Likud...*, *op. cit.*, p 144.

⁵¹⁰ The PM even considered to appoint a commission of enquiry to consider the conduct of the opposition during the war.

loss of public support, which actually was to blame to the management of the war and the lack of control by the *Likud*.

4.1.4 Sabra e Chatila

With the exit of the PLO from Beirut, Begin felt that the major part of Operation Peace for Galilee had succeeded; instead, Sharon's aspirations were not fully satisfied yet. It was now time to complete the second part of his plan: to favor the creation of a new Israeli friendly Lebanese political order. It began to make sense to charge parliamentary election of a new president, national survival depended on the choice of a candidate acceptable to the Israelis (in this case, Bashir Gemayel) but the IDF had a list of all members and the election day, you did so to ensure the presence of the supporters of Gemayel and hinder the participation of the opposition. On August 23rd, the Lebanese parliament elected Bashir Gemayel President of Lebanon with 57 votes out of a total of 62 deputies who attended the session. Jerusalem had work hard for this result and many MKs had come to vote escorted by Israeli soldiers⁵¹¹. The main goals of the new president were, first of all, the withdrawal of all foreign troops (Israeli, Syrians, Palestinians) from Lebanon in order to demonstrate their independence, to expand its domestic political base and to emphasize the pro-Arab orientation rather than emphasize its connection with the Israelis. Secondly, the reunification of Beirut under Lebanese sovereignty, which is why he needed to agree with the traditional Muslim leadership of west Beirut and disarm, arrest or expel the Palestinian militias left in that part of town⁵¹²: of course, such a cleaning got along with the wishes and plans of Sharon⁵¹³.

According to the analysis of Israeli intelligence on Arab reactions to the election of Gemayel Syria would not intervene militarily but there would be attempts to assassinating Bashir or encourage its Lebanese allies to take action against him: on September 14th, a member of the Lebanese Syrian National Party detonated an explosive near the headquarters of the Phalange Party, the new President of the Republic was among the victims. The unexpected assassination of the young leader did collapse the entire Israeli policy in Lebanon like a house of cards; in the short term the president's death put a huge question mark on the intention of Phalangists to clean up the western part of the

⁵¹¹ Morris B., *Vittime...*, *ibidem*, p.675.

⁵¹² At that time Lebanon had 300.000 Palestinian inhabitants, a third of whom lived in those areas. The Phalangists accused them of having poisoned the relations between Christians and Muslims and to have altered the demographic balance to the detriment of Christians. Gemayel had the desire to expel them and the Israeli invasion was for him miracle that might have turned the dream into reality.

⁵¹³ Many in the Israeli intelligence believed or at least judged likely coup in violation evacuation mediated by the Americans they had left behind between 2,000 and 2,500 militiamen and feared their attempt to take control of Beirut.

city, as Bashir and Sharon had previously decided⁵¹⁴, but also provided a pretext for the Israelis to take control of the city. Sharon lost no time and even before the corpse of Gemayel was identified, Sharon was already at work to enact the 'occupation of the western part of Beirut; the very next day, the IDF occupied the areas previously controlled by the Palestinian forces: the pretext was the need to restore the order and to avoid reprisals between the opposing Lebanese factions. Actually, Sharon was hoping to remove the last traces of Palestinian terrorists left and to take advantage of the Phalangists, who agreed to enter the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila. In front of this option, the military and intelligence leaders strongly advised Sharon not to allow the access to Christian militias, because after the assassination of their leader they were looking for revenge. Saguy warned Sharon that: «The Phalange will try to settle their accounts, one day they will begin to kill and who knows when it will stop⁵¹⁵».

Despite these strong recommendations, on 15 September the first units of 'IDF penetrated into West Beirut (without Cabinet's consultation or approval), on the morning after the conquest it was completed. The Defense Minister met the Chief of Staff and warned him that the Phalangists were preparing to enter the camps: at 18:00 on September 16th, one hundred and fifty men of the Phalange entered the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila through Israeli lines, meanwhile an Israeli battery of 81 mm mortars began firing lighting bullets to illuminate the path of the militias.

Meanwhile in Jerusalem, the Government protested because the actions taken in Beirut were decided without their approval, then the PM explained that there wasn't simply enough time to inform or consult all the members of the Cabinet. Then, Eitan finally informed the ministries that the Christian militias were actually and already in the camps, the government was worried that the IDF would have to enter to help them, such was their opinion on the military capabilities of their ally. Apparently, only David Levy⁵¹⁶ took note of the reality that lay behind much reticence and declared «“When I heard that the Phalangists have already entered into certain neighborhoods, no one will believe that they are there to maintain order and the blame will fall on us⁵¹⁷», the other members of the cabinet were silent.

⁵¹⁴ On September 12th Arik and Bashir decided that the Phalangists would root out the remaining 2000 Palestinian terrorist which the minister of defense believed to be present in West Beirut; the implementation of this vague plan provided for the entrance of IDF's forces in West Beirut, in order to assume the control, while the Phalangists would carry out the "heavy work" in the refugee camps, performing interrogations, arrests and demolition of buildings.

⁵¹⁵ Morris B., *Vittime...*, *ibidem*, p.677.

⁵¹⁶ He is an Israeli politician who served as MK between 1969 and 2006, as well as Deputy PM ,Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Immigrant Absorption and Minister of Housing and Construction. Most of his offices in the parliament were taken under the *Likud*, but he also took part in Ehud Barak's Labor-led government between 1999 and 2001.

⁵¹⁷ Morris B., *Vittime...*, *ibidem*, p.678.

The carnage took place from Thursday until Sunday morning (16-18th September) and, only few hours after the entrance of the Phalangists, Israeli soldiers positioned along the perimeter understood that something terrible was happening; the notice that a carnage was taking place reached some Israeli headquarter⁵¹⁸ but the military hierarchy considered the reports as exaggerations and so they did nothing to stop them. Then, the next morning, on September 18, the high commanders of the army in Beirut simply gave the order and the Phalangists left the camps and thus the massacre ended. The Israeli intelligence estimated that between 700 and 800 people have been killed, but other sources, such as the Red Crescent, gave even higher numbers.

As the journalists and Israeli officers entered the refugee camps, reports about piles of corpses and the atrocities committed began to spread, but the PM, who had spent most of the time praying in the synagogue (it was Rosh Hashanah), claimed to have heard of the massacre for the first time from the BBC. In the meantime, the Phalange and the Lebanese radio began to break the news of the slaughter and Eitan asked the Phalangists to recognize publicly what their militias did; of course he received a negative response. Indeed, in that moment the Lebanese political situation it was fundamental to be focused on the national reconciliation and on the forthcoming future. For this reason, Muslim factions and even the PLO's leaders didn't try to capitalize what happened in Sabra and Chatila, contributing to the campaign of disinformation. For the Lebanese the Palestinians and the Syrians was thus preferable to shift the blame on 'Israeli army.

4.1.5 The Kahan Commission

The outrage in Israel exploded, the world held the Israelis morally responsible for the massacre and the upper echelons of the IDF were in a sort of rebellion against Sharon's authority⁵¹⁹. If Begin and the Israeli government hoped that the storm would have faded away, they were greatly misunderstanding the situation: the reports of the atrocities, including the videos of piles of corpses, clumped in the streets of the camps, were dominating the Western media, keeping the topic as a priority in Israeli politics. A sense of nausea related to the whole adventure Lebanon soon spread all over the Country: for many Israeli Sabra and Chatila became the symbol of that conflict, but Begin and his executive were resisting the pressure of the society who was calling for the establishment of an independent commission.

⁵¹⁸ Ze'ev Schiff, Ha'aretz correspondent of war, spoke with some officers of the Chief of Staff in Tel Aviv but then, not at all reassured, called the Minister of Communications Zippori, that spoke to Shamir, who did nothing. Also, the reporter of the Israeli television Ron Ben-Yishay talked to the IDF's officials in Beirut and phoned Sharon in order to warn them about the ongoing massacre.

⁵¹⁹ Many senior commanders said that the Minister of the Defense didn't care about the reputation of the Israeli fighting forces, not only avoiding to taking into consideration their ethical code, but also disrespecting it.

Labor members of the *Knesset* called upon the PM and the minister of Defense to draw the immediate and personal conclusions about their responsibility in the matter. This time, the wishes of the Labor Party's leadership seemed to correspond with the initiative of Peace Now, who approached Yossi Beilin⁵²⁰, the spokesman of the party, with the idea of a joint demonstration. So, the doves in the Alignment tried to persuade the party bureau in order to give Peres the mandate to meet the peace movement. possibly the largest demonstration. The common efforts resulted in a 400.000 demonstration in Tel Aviv on 25th September (possibly the largest in Israel's history), calling for an inquiry committee and the government's resignation. This rally was the expression of the anger, the opposition and the resentment that Lebanese enterprise originated. Therefore, the out-of-the-blue decision of the Labor Party to take part in a public protest, after months of vacillation, was an index of the sharp political polarization that was taking place in the Country. taken place in the country. But, despite such protestations, the PM did not immediately abandoned his position of self-justification; actually, he was persuaded appoint a judicial commission, not by a moral argument political one, rather by a political ones: the *Mafdal* emphasized the importance of it, threatening a coalition crisis and President Navon's appeal for the establishment of a commission placed the greatest pressure on Begin: «We owe it to ourselves and to our image in the world [...] and to the cultured world of which we see ourselves apart to find out quickly and exactly what has happened⁵²¹». Finally, Begin appointed a commission of inquiry chaired by Yitzhak Kahan, the President of Supreme Court, on September 28th.

The Commission heard dozens of witnesses, read plenty of statements and documents and finally, its report was published on February 7th 1983; the conclusions stated that the IDF and the State of Israel had an indirect responsibility for the massacre, proven beyond any doubt that the perpetrators were the members of the Phalange and not the Israeli army (the militias entered in the refugee camps and concretely carried out the slaughter, but under the army's encouragement and the unawareness of the government). Therefore, on the political level, the Commission charged a certain degree of responsibility to Begin for his lack of involvement and Shamir for ignoring reports of the massacre, also Rafel Eytan (the Chief of Staff) was heavily criticized for his grossly negligence and omissions. But the Commission reserved its harshest judgment for Sharon, highlighting that the Minister of Defense had personal responsibility for what happened and that he should draw the appropriate personal conclusions regarding the failings in the manner in which he discharged the duties of his office: the report recommended to discharge him from his office. The suggestion was that the PM could exercise his authority to remove the Minister from his duty (together with several senior army

⁵²⁰ He is an Israeli statesman and scholar who has served in multiple ministerial and leadership positions in the Israeli government. Much of his political career was in the Labor Party. He also writes for some important Israel newspaper such as *Ha'aretz* and *Yisrael HaYom*.

⁵²¹ Shindler C., *Likud...*, op. cit., p. 162.

officers). Of course, Sharon announced immediately the rejection of the findings of the Commission; but the point was that neither Begin did wish to dismissing him (also because the PM felt some personal responsibility for having appointed Sharon in the first place and then for having failed in controlling him). After days of debate, a compromise was finally struck and Sharon was hunted sideways to be minister without portfolio, replaced on defense by Moshe Arens, Israel's ambassador to Washington. The Kahan Report ended with a blind, general criticism against the IDF, regretting that the reaction of the soldiers of the Israeli army was not strong enough in order to prevent such despicable acts⁵²².

4.1.6 The end of the Lebanon campaign

On September 21st Amin Gemayel was elected President of Lebanon but, notwithstanding the degree of kinship with Bashir, he wasn't in favor (as his brother was) of Israeli influence in Lebanese politics. During the months following the massacre, Israel continued to sink deeper and deeper into the Lebanese quagmire and the appointment of Amin (with his friendship with Damascus) put a definitive end to Israeli political aspirations in Lebanon. So, on May 17th 1983, the two countries signed an agreement that formally put an end to the conflict and recognize as inviolable the border between two states: Jerusalem would have to withdraw its armed forces within a distance between forty and forty-five km from the international border, while the UN forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) would have controlled the northern territory adjacent to that area. But there was an flaw in the agreement, now that Damascus had conquered again its influence on the country, it never declared its commitment upon the withdrawal of the troops from Lebanon.

From then on, the Israelis antagonized all the Lebanese factions, especially in the South, where the Shia population, which at the beginning of the Lebanese enterprise welcomed the Israeli troops due to the rivalries with the Palestinians in the area, now was beginning to show a harsh resentment against Israeli presence⁵²³. In such conditions, a new guerrilla movement, called Hezbollah⁵²⁴, appeared. It was far more effective and resolute than the defeated PLO and its Shia militias were able to force

⁵²² Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p. 684

⁵²³ Once the PLO left those areas, the Israelis and given the strong Israeli presence was strong and the army seemed to be insensitive towards the local people's welfare needs and it appeared to be unconcerned about the necessity to open a dialogue with them.

⁵²⁴ *Hezbollah* (Party of God) is a movement that was created by a group of ultra-religious families, guided by some Shia priests, after the Israeli invasion in the summer of '82. Its main goal in the short-term was to expel all the foreigners from Lebanon (Israelis included), while in the long-term to transform the Lebanese Republic into an Islamic Republic on the model of Iran. Then, even in the longer-term, the goal is to carry on an anti-Israeli *jihad* in order to give back Jerusalem and Palestine to Islam. Its militias in Southern Lebanon were able to build a sort of little Shia state in the Lebanese one.

Israeli government to definitively withdrawal from Lebanon⁵²⁵. Indeed, through the growing number of ambushes carried out by the militants against the IDF (mostly carried out by using suicide bombers), Hezbollah proved to be able to bear the cost of guerrilla warfare much better than the Israelis, whose public opinion more and more considered the war in Lebanon as intolerable; but it was only in 1985 that, after the formation of a National Unity Government⁵²⁶, the plan for the withdrawal from southern Lebanon was finally approved⁵²⁷.

At that time, the dead soldiers were 650 and nearly 3,000 seriously injured⁵²⁸ (without taking into account the victims among the Lebanese and Palestinians civilians, without any reliable data we can refer to). Besides the nonsense and the bloodshed that characterized this conflict, Sharon achieved some undeniable goals: the Palestinian military infrastructure in southern Lebanon was wiped out and the organization have to leave the country. The PLO lost many fighters and its headquarters moved to the far away Tunisia, its military units were dislocated almost everywhere in the Middle East and North Africa, ceasing to threat Israelis borders. Also, Arafat was greatly weakened and, forced to scale back his ambitions, he started an internal review process, which culminated in 1988 with the PLO official statement recognizing the Jewish state and renouncing to terrorism. Therefore, the invasion of Lebanon pushed the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine on the diplomatic track.

On the other hand, the expulsion of the PLO from southern Lebanon brought with it a side-effect, the appearance of a terrible enemy, namely Hezbollah; this organization would prove to be much more determined and lethal, aggravating the situation to the point that, in the mid-nineties the Israeli Generals would call this guerrilla, war of attrition: the goal of the forty years of peace along the border with Lebanon, which Begin Sharon had in mind, had been completely missed.

Finally, the whole Arab world was deeply impressed by the massive force that the IDF used in Lebanon, the level of suffering inflicted during the siege of the capital and the massacre in the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila. This feeling influenced the Egyptian attitude towards the distension process which was taking place between the two countries since the signing of Camp David; so, even if Egypt did not give up the peace treaty, it took severe diplomatic measures (such as the recall

⁵²⁵ Since the elections of 1984, the *Likud* government was avoiding to seriously take into account the only and sole real alternative, a sort of unilateral disengagement, fearing that such a move would make the entire invasion of Lebanon to appear as a senseless mission.

⁵²⁶ The Israeli electorate didn't give the majority neither to the *Likud*, nor to the *Ma'arach*. Since none of the two main political blocs appeared capable of forming a stable majority without the other, Peres and Shamir (the new leader of the nationalist camp who succeeded Begin in 1983, following his resignation) decided to form together a broader coalition.

⁵²⁷ The withdrawal was rapid, unilateral and without any political or military agreements with Hezbollah or any other kind of warranty by the Syrian and the Lebanese governments.

⁵²⁸ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro...*, op. cit., p.464

of its ambassador from Tel Aviv), freezing the normalization process and replacing it with a "cold peace". In conclusion, Operation Peace for Galilee damaged the international image of Israel, weakening its relationship with the US and creating a deep and bitter division within the society, leaving the Israelis with a sense of failure.

4.1.7 Consequences of Operation Peace for Galilee on Israeli politics

Menachem Begin's instinctive response was to turn his back on his international critics, appealing to the Cabinet and his close ranks in an act against a hostile world, saying: «*Goyim* are killing goyim and the whole world is trying to hang Jews for the crime⁵²⁹»: In addition to invoke this historical Jewish suspicion, he confounded the difference between Israeli moral responsibility for the crime and the actual crime itself which was committed by the Phalangists. The question of responsibility for the massacre quickly moved from beyond the political, to the realm of morality: the course of the war and the massacre in the camps became almost a struggle for the correct interpretation of Jewishness; assimilated Jews, secular and Diaspora intellectuals looked to religious sources in order to support their understandings of Jewish values.

Several historians and military commentators, who subsequently examined the Lebanon war, observed that the real question was whether or not the IDF reacted proportionally to the threat and whether it was sufficiently committed to the minimization of material damages and loss of human lives; those considerations reflected the fear of many Israelis, who were afraid that the army had lost its doctrine of the *tohar haneshek* (the purity of arms). But, despite the leadership of Sharon and Eitan that were giving minimal importance to the respect of such principles, there were plenty of examples that testify the contrary (many soldiers and commanders explicitly protested against the way the war was conducted, many of them also refusing to serve under the leadership of Sharon). Notwithstanding these episodes, there was a shocked awareness for the political direction in which Begin and his government had taken the Jewish State, especially due to the high cost of the war in terms of human losses. Also, the outside world lingered disoriented after Operation Peace for Galilee: Labor-dominated Israel, which was familiar with, seemed to have disappeared, after having turning down the self-imposed restrictions on the use of power and its values.

This sense of responsibility for the moral and intellectual virtues of the Jewish tradition permeated in the psyche of thousands of Israeli Jews and became as central as the war objectives. Operation Peace for Galilee was more than a bad war for Israel: it polarized the political division within the society because what happened in the summer of 1982 was, for many Israelis, a sort of challenge to their very identity as Jews and was a watershed for a mental change to take place: the citizens of the Jewish State learnt that it was very important not to retreat intellectually but instead to participate

⁵²⁹ Shindler C., *Likud...*, op. cit., p. 161.

in the struggle for the soul of Israel. Therefore, plenty of political activities arose from this realization and they formed the basis of the opposition to the policies taken by the *Likud*, in the next decade. So, the situation that came out was a bad outcome for this party because, not only the succession for the leadership was more uncertain (Sharon forfeited the possibility of succeeding Begin and he was now marked as a figure who could not be trusted with high office), but was the end of a dream. During Begin's second term as PM, the revisionist philosophy was carried forward on in a triumphalist way without taking into account the demands of the other actors on the political scenario, simply sweeping aside the reality and causing the incapability to elaborate an adequate response. This was possible thanks to a cocktail of heavy nationalism and total disdain for all those who questioned the grand vision pursued by Begin and his allies. Actually, those conditions were mainly favored by the fact that a larger part of the population was inclined to listen to that kind of narrative and it was in support of those ideals: Begin was seen as tough and effective and the fear of Palestinian terrorism that provoked, in this way the need for absolute security silenced minority views.

The war in Lebanon was a war for the Greater Israel, even if could be absurd to think that the Palestinian problem would have been solved by military action in a foreign country, where the problem had no roots. Moreover the story of Sabra and Chatila became the catalyst of international attentions, bringing back on the world scene the Palestinian question and causing a substantial shift in the American attitude: with the Reagan Plan (1982) the US government shifted from the acceptance of the concept of autonomy for the Palestinians (as conceived in the Camp David agreement), to a plan that called for a full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank in order to create a homeland for the Palestinians to administer together with Jordan. With the first Lebanon war, Begin provided an interesting illustration of what it is defined as a "security dilemma": the pursuit of absolute security turns into a self-damaging behavior, due to the fact that such type of attitude creates insecurity in the enemy forcing them to adopt self-defense countermeasures. The final outcome is a vicious circle of accumulation of security and use of power.

In the light of the Holocaust narrative, Begin had developed the burning desire to reach absolute security for the Jewish people, without considering the reactions that his fears and anxieties would have generated in the neighboring Arab countries and within Israeli society itself. For Begin was the end of an epoch: he could no longer hold back to reality and his conditions were aggravated by the death of his wife, at the end of 1982. It was a tremendous blow for the leader that, together with his gradual realization of what it actually happened during the war, left him with all the symptoms of a depressive psychosis. On September 15th 1983, Begin resigned and retreated to private life.

4.2 The 1984 National Unity Government, first attempt

On August 1983, Begin announced his intention to resign and retire from political life, with a sole personal reason to explain his decision: « I can't go further⁵³⁰». Under a political point of view, the conflict in Lebanon was probably the main cause of his disappointment and despair⁵³¹: The Central Committee of *Likud* chose Shamir as the successor of the Begin: the personality and character could not be more different; the first one was an extraordinary idealistic orator, the second one a pragmatic man of few words. However, the distance between the two was not so wide, in fact both were disciples of Jabotinsky's revisionist Zionism and, if could be possible, Shamir was in some ways even more intransigent than Begin⁵³²: his natural instinct was to resist the change, to keep the status-quo and to be insensitive to the idea of negotiation and compromise. This trend will be the element that will bring down the National Unity Government (NUG) formed in 1988, paving the way for Labor Party's victory in 1992 elections.

The 1984 election results were very disappointing for the Alignment. The situation in Lebanon was rapidly deteriorating, the economic crisis was mounting with an inflation around 400% and the *Likud* was quite fragmented due to internal party struggle; due to these preconditions an overwhelming electoral victory of the Labor camp was expected, but the final outcome of the polls was much more disappointing. the Labor Party was unable to secure a clear electoral victory, obtaining the preference of its traditional supporters (mainly Ashkenazic, from the areas of Tel Aviv, Haifa and Givatayim and from older age groups). This was due to Peres' inability to obtain the support of the Sephardic voters, who went back to *Likud*'s realm at the very last-minute costing the victory⁵³³. The more probable explanation for the Sephardim's reluctance to vote for the Alignment was both the strength of their previous emotional commitment to the *Likud* and their continuous suspicious attitude towards the Labor camp. The overall performance of the Alignment confirmed that it had become a party which enjoyed a continuing high degree of support from its traditional

⁵³⁰ Shlaim A., *Il muro di ferro...*, *ibidem*, p.463

⁵³¹ A group of demonstrators affixed outside his home a sign on which was constantly updated the number of victims. Moreover, family members of the dead soldiers accused him for the absurd death of their beloved; a father wrote him: «...and if you have a glimmer of conscience and humanity within yourself, could my great sorrow, the suffering of a father in Israel whose world has been destroyed, forever haunt you during your hours of sleep and wakefulness. May be a sign of Cain for the eternity»:

⁵³² For the new prime minister, the idea of withdrawal from any part of the Land of Israel was simply unconceivable. Indeed, he was a strong opponent of the withdrawal from Sinai and the greatest supporter of the annexation of the Golan heights.

⁵³³ Many of those who voted for the *Likud* in 1981 but who had previously stated their preference for the Alignment, returned to the *Likud*. In this group, the 3% were of Sephardic origin and they were crucial to the outcome of the election.

constituencies⁵³⁴, but crucially did not enjoy access to all strata of society as it had done during its period as a dominant party (until 1977)⁵³⁵.

In those elections the Alignment went from 47 to 44 seats, while the *Likud* led by Shamir slid from 48 to 41 seats: Although the *Likud* had lost 7 seats and 120,000 votes, this was a rather important result considering the absence of Begin. But this outcome was reached also to the alliance with the extreme-right parties and price to pay was a redistribution of the votes from the nationalist electorate, promoting the advancement of those political factions in the *Knesset* (the greater scandal was that the *Kach*⁵³⁶ party was able to attract enough votes to secure a seat in the parliament). What was evident was the deep division of the electorate: the combined votes of *Likud*, *Tehiya*, *Morasha* and *Mafdal* were 875,001, while the Labor, *Yahad* and *Ratz* 874,821⁵³⁷.

Actually, the Labor Party had little choice but to agree to the formation of a NUG after the elections⁵³⁸. As Ezer Weizman⁵³⁹'s *Yahad* party⁵⁴⁰ was against the formation of a narrow-based Labor-led government which relied on the support of the Arab parties, it would have been extremely difficult for Peres to form a coalition even if they had wanted to. Actually, the Labor leader was also against such an idea for two main reasons: first of all, he believed that a government with a Jewish majority was necessary in order to withdraw the IDF from Lebanon⁵⁴¹. Secondly, he was strictly influenced by the self-narrative promulgated by socialist Zionism, the current of the founding fathers of the nation, and for this reason he was extremely reluctant to rely on the votes of non-Zionist parties. Moreover, there were further intuitions that brought Peres to think that joining the

⁵³⁴ In addition, Peres made a tactical error by allowing the elections to be held during the month of July, instead in the month of May as it was in its original proposal. Indeed, it was estimated that among 100,000-150,000 Israelis were abroad during the summer; most of them were voters belonging to groups loyal to the Labor camp: these numbers, in electoral terms, meant to have lost between 6 and 9 seats in the *Knesset*.

⁵³⁵ Lochery N., *The Israeli Labor Party in the shadow of the Likud*, Ithaca Press, 1997, p. 250.

⁵³⁶ It is a radical Orthodox Jewish, ultranationalist political party in Israel, existing from 1971 to 1994. Founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane in the early 1970s and following his Jewish nationalist-Orthodox ideology, the party entered the *Knesset* following the 1984 elections, after several electoral failures. However, it was barred from participating in the 1988 elections under the revised *Knesset* Elections Law banning parties that incited racism.

⁵³⁷ Shindler C., *Likud* ..., *ibidem*, p.203.

⁵³⁸ The weakness of the Labor block prevented Peres from forming a coalition government.

⁵³⁹ He was the seventh President of Israel, first elected in 1993 and re-elected in 1998. Before the presidency, Weizman was commander of the Israeli Air Force and Minister of Defense.

⁵⁴⁰ The party managed to win three seats in the election and they were invited to join Yitzhak Shamir's coalition government, with Weizman becoming Minister without Portfolio.

⁵⁴¹ He believed that the Israeli electorate would only accept a Jewish government to realize the disengagement from Lebanon, because it would have been perceived as a choice free from Arab interference.

NUG was a necessity in order to deal with the economic crisis and other important internal issues. Lastly, Peres had to protect his position as a leader of the party, so he needed to participate to the broader coalition with the *Likud* in order to obtain positions both for his clients and his potential rivals (for example Rabin made it clear that the price for not challenging Peres was the Defense Ministry).

Also, Shamir had strong motivation that persuaded him to form a National Unity Government, mainly they were related to the need to manage relations with the radical right; the difficulty of Shamir was originated by the scandal concerning the Jewish Underground⁵⁴² that broke out a few weeks after the elections of 1984. In addition, the fascination of the electoral promises made by the *Likud* in 1977 had already significantly dissipated, plus there were 100,000 new voters and *Likud* in danger of losing many of these votes in favor of far-right parties. The latter scenario was perceived by Shamir's strategists as a far worse threat than the collaboration with the Labor Party⁵⁴³.

So, after the elections, the complex negotiation between the *Likud* and the Alignment took place and, as a result, Peres secured a Rotation Agreement for the position of Prime Minister and the Defense Ministry for the entire period of the government ⁵⁴⁴: this pact provided for an equal share of the premiership office. Peres would have assumed this role from 1984 until 1986, from that year until new elections Shamir was entitled for that position; Rabin would have been the Ministry of Defense from the beginning until the end of the mandate. This unusual balance reflected the fact that the two leading parties had approximately equal power, in practice this meant that each of the two coalitions had the capability to exercise the veto power that, together with the deep ideological chasm between the two (especially regarding the peace process and the relationship with the Arab neighbors), could easily originate a political paralysis⁵⁴⁵.

The government's guidelines were composed by thirty-three points. Following are listed the more important statements related adopted to guide the foreign policy (the reason of this selection relies on the fact that the relationships with the Arab countries were the catalysts of the main frictions

⁵⁴² The Jewish Underground (*Hamakhteret hayehudit*) was a Jewish terrorist organization formed by prominent members of the Israeli political movement *Gush Emunim*, existed from 1979 to 1984. During those years the organization try to carry out a terroristic attack in order to blow up the Dome of the Rock. On April 27th 1984, the Shin Bet agents arrested twenty-five people, predominantly settlers in the West bank and the Golan Heights. The arrests followed an extensive two-year investigation. At the end, the members of the Jewish Underground were eventually rounded up and brought to trial on charges that including violating the 1948 Prevention of Terrorism Decree. The charge of membership of a terrorist organization was dropped against ten out of the twenty-seven in a plea bargain.

⁵⁴³ Shindler C., *Likud* ..., op. cit., p. 201.

⁵⁴⁴ As well as an equal division of the remaining twenty-four portfolios between the *Likud* and the Labor block, with the creation of an inner Cabinet consisting of ten ministers (five from Labor and five from *Likud*).

⁵⁴⁵ That was also due to the fact that an inner Cabinet was created.

inside the NUG): the completion of the withdrawal from Lebanon, the assurance of a stable environment for the northern settlements, the continuation of the normalization process begun with Camp David and the opening of the negotiations with Jordan⁵⁴⁶.

The formation of the NUG which followed the *Knesset* elections of 1984 marked the next ideological step in Israeli politics: in the period between 1984-1988, both the major parties (*Likud* and *Ha'Avoda*) seemed to accept the tie of near parity between them. The consequences of the participation to this broad coalition for the Israeli left became clear almost immediately with Mapam's decision to leave the Alignment and return to opposition. The split marked a realignment in the Israeli left with the Labor leadership drifting further towards the center in pursuit of the government, while *Mapam* started to offer an alternative path, culminating in a more radical leftist position. The major accusations of the leaders of *Mapam* to the Labor Party was to put the Peace Process back ten years with its participation in the NUG; moreover, they claimed that the leaders of the party were obsessed by power and would exploit any opportunity to return to government⁵⁴⁷. Labor Party's participation had an important consequence for the party itself: the emergence of a strong dovish element (with Uzi Baram as unofficial head) that in the long-term will increase its independence from the leadership (more hawkish): this created a greater ideological distance inside the party, stimulating a process of internal democratization.

4.2.1 The premiership of Shimon Peres (1984-1986)

Despite the limited maneuverability of his government during its first years, Peres' performance as PM was remarkable⁵⁴⁸. He had three priorities: to bring inflation under control, to withdraw from Lebanon and to revive the Middle Eastern peace process. The ability to achieve all these goals⁵⁴⁹ was also due to his decision to be supported by a group of professionals, known as the "100-days Team". Moreover, the NUG itself worked better and the degree of the cooperation

⁵⁴⁶ Shlaim A., *The iron wall...*, op. cit., p. 472.

⁵⁴⁷ The party's thirst for power was based on its previous status; for its entire history prior to 1977 it had been at the center of the development of the state and had the status of dominant party. By 1984, the conditioning effects of this dominance period were still apparent in its overriding desire to return to government.

⁵⁴⁸ Due to Peres' outstanding results, there was uncertainty over whether Peres would have reneged on the rotation deal and not hand over the power to Shamir: this factor was a source for constant tension within the government during that period.

⁵⁴⁹ The first issue was dealt by Peres himself, while the second one was achieved by Rabin as Minister of Defense.

between the parties was much greater and more successful in this first period than after the rotation, notwithstanding Shamir's difficult acceptance to act as Peres' number two⁵⁵⁰.

The first result was the withdrawal from Lebanon: according to a survey, the 90% of the population was in favor of such political move⁵⁵¹ and it was widely welcomed in Israel. It was the demonstration of Peres and Rabin's political skills to widespread a sense of security, even regarding the very instable situation on the northern border. The *Likud* opposed the withdrawal, so Peres needed to be backed by all Labor ministers and by minority parties (the *Mafdal* and *Shas*); but the PM didn't want to create an evident Labor-*Likud* rift on this fundamental issue. For this reason, he started to look for support also inside the *Likud* and he found it with David Levy⁵⁵² who, with his vote, gave to Peres a larger majority than expected⁵⁵³.

Comparing with the Lebanese withdrawal, the economic crisis represented a major challenge for the NUG: at that time, the inflation was out of control at an annual rate of 500%⁵⁵⁴ (and it was in the three digits bracket since 1979⁵⁵⁵). However, Israel's wild inflation was one of the symptom of deeper social and economic problems⁵⁵⁶ which were manifesting themselves in balance of payments problems and increasing foreign and domestic debts. The situation was tough and the Ministry of Finance was sacrificed to the *Likud*, in order to secure the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister to Labor, but Peres knew that his work would have been mainly judged on his ability to restore the economic situation. Therefore, the PM decided to take it upon himself and to largely bypass Yitzhak Moda'i, the *Likud* Finance Minister⁵⁵⁷.

⁵⁵⁰ Even if Shamir himself accepted that Peres operated better when he was in charge as Prime Minister, he still found it nearly impossible to work with him.

⁵⁵¹ Shlaim A., *The iron wall...*, *ibidem*, p. 474

⁵⁵² He mainly voted for the withdrawal in order to damage Shamir and Sharon, moreover he was well aware of the popularity of such a move inside Israeli society.

⁵⁵³ Levy's motivations for voting with the Labor Party were mostly dictated by intra-party considerations, in order to damage Shamir but, most of all, Sharon. Indeed, he was aware of the popularity of such a position inside Israeli society.

⁵⁵⁴ Worldwide inflation data, *Historic inflation in Israel (CPI)*, (<http://www.inflation.eu>).

⁵⁵⁵ From 133% in 1980, it leaped to 191% in 1983 and then to 445% in 1984.

⁵⁵⁶ A joke at the time asked whether it was cheaper to take a bus or a taxi from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. The price in shekels was about the same, but the correct answer was the taxi. Why? Because, unlike the bus, you paid at the end of the one-hour trip (when the shekel would be worth less than at the start).

⁵⁵⁷ He was removed after speaking out against government policies and his dismissal caused a major crisis in the NUG, which almost led to its collapse.

During the summer of 1985, the government introduced the Emergency Stabilization Plan⁵⁵⁸ (ESP), an austerity program, whose aim was to enact realistic cut on the budget expenditure. The more fundamental problem with economy was to be found in the Zionist institutions⁵⁵⁹ which, instead of allowing the production to determine the standard of living, permitted the flow of capital to do so. For this reason, the government announced the program of economic liberalization in order to reduce the governments' highly interventionist role in economy and to encourage competition within the domestic market. The ESP proved to be extremely popular with the public, due to the fact that it produced prices stability and the relative economic calm benefited the population, who increased its support for both Peres and the Labor Party.

4.2.1.1 Back to the Jordanian Option

Conversely, for the inflation and the withdrawal from Lebanon, Peres got some difficulties in changing the diplomatic and political climate of the Arab-Israeli relations, this was his greatest ambition in order to set the preconditions needed to solve the Palestinian issue, through a separate agreement with Jordan. That was the true *leitmotiv* of his policy during the entire life of the NUG. He believed that the long-term goal of the *Likud* to keep the control over the West Bank was a tremendous mistake because, with the time against Israel, it would have undermined the basis of the Jewish and democratic character of the State. Besides this, the continuation of the military occupation was not a satisfactory solution: primarily because Israel was ruling over a half million Arabs living in difficult conditions and, secondly, because given their birth rate (much higher than the Israeli one) the demographic balance would have changed soon less in their favor. For these reasons, the only possible alternative consisted in the Jordanian Option, a territorial compromise with King Hussein in order to return the most densely populated areas of the West Bank to the Hashemite kingdom and to keep the most important strategic areas under Israeli control. By the way, this strategy had always been the option from preferred by Labor party since 1967. Also, Rabin totally agreed with this vision and together asked the team of experts headed by Yossi Beilin to

⁵⁵⁸ A total freeze of prices of all goods and services was imposed and the linkage mechanism was suspended. Everything from price tags in shops and stores, charges for services, prices specified in contracts, wages and public budgets to foreign exchange rates, remained fixed at the exact nominal quotation on the day the policy was declared.

It worked. In 1985, inflation fell to 185% (less than half the rate in 1984). Within a few months, the authorities began to lift the price freeze on some items; in other cases it took almost a year. In 1986, inflation was down to just 19%.

⁵⁵⁹ *Histadrut* above all and the measures taken were possible thanks to the historical control that Labor Party had always had on this institution.

investigate the means by which to realize this aim; the recommendation expressed was to recreate the model of Camp David of direct negotiations, with the involvement of the US.

When the PM started to approach Amman, the response was cautious and encouraging; king Hussein was willing to start the negotiations without preconditions, but he was facing two problems: the first was that the Summit Arab League, held in Rabat in 1974, had recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people (then he couldn't start any official negotiations without the approval of the latter); the second was related to another summit of the Arab League Summit, held in Fez in 1982, according to which the negotiations with Israel were allowed, but only in the framework of an international conference. Unfortunately, at that moment the idea of an international forum was extremely unpopular because the result of such a meeting would have considered as an external imposed solution.

In 1985, Peres held a speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations where he announced the world that Israel intended to launch peace talks with the kingdom of Jordan and that the purpose of these meetings would be to conclude a peace treaty between Israel and the Arab, in addition to find a solution for the Palestinian issue. A week later the PM repeated the statement in the *Knesset* and there were again complaints from members of the *Likud* and extreme-right parties, notwithstanding these complaints the *Knesset* approved the plan. Shamir and his party colleagues were deeply against this proposal, but they feared that if they would have refused, Peres would have refused to keep the Rotation Agreement. Shamir knew that a political crisis on this issue would lead to the creation of a government headed exclusively by Peres or to new elections (most likely won by Labor).

Peres, as a PM, kept on working frantically, developing as much as possible his diplomatic activities because he was aware that the end of his term was coming and, despite some of his supporters were pushing him not to keep the rotation agreement with *Likud*, he wanted to be respectful to the oath with Shamir and leaving to him the premiership⁵⁶⁰. In a statement to the *Knesset* on October 7th 1986, he showed his achievements, among them: the reduction of internal economic crisis, the withdrawal from Lebanon, the new co-existence in the territories and the progress in the process peace. As he explained: «The choice was between preconditions without negotiations, or negotiations without preconditions. I chose the first⁵⁶¹». On October 20th 1986, he left the premiership to Shamir: the handshake between the incoming and the outgoing PM was marking the fate of the peace process, but it became clear just some months later.

Peres disappointed many in the party by implementing the rotation agreement in 1986 but, actually, he had little choice. Indeed, even if he could have called the elections as a successful Prime Minister,

⁵⁶⁰ Peres decided to keep the promise with Shamir also because he believed that if he would have reneged on his word, his credibility would have been compromise.

⁵⁶¹ Shlaim A., *The iron wall...*, *ibidem*, p. 485

in such circumstances the party may have been defeated because the electorate thought it unfair that the rotation agreement had not be respected. For instance, there was a clear majority among Israelis that wished to see the maintenance of the NUG⁵⁶².

4.2.2 The implementation of the Rotation Agreement, Shamir to power (1986-1988)

The post rotation government led by Shamir, with Peres serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs, was dominated by the peace process. Consequently, this NUG was characterized by a sense of paralysis caused by the major differences between Labor and *Likud* on the conduct of the peace process and by the state of parity within the Cabinet, which prevented any substantial decisions from being taken on the issue⁵⁶³. Even if there was a high degree of mistrust between *Likud* and Labor during the duration of the NUG, it was better contained in the first phase than after the post-rotation period: the problems that appeared in the year 1986/1988 were caused (as the *Likud* claimed) by Peres' reluctance to play a secondary role similar to that Shamir had occupied and by leftist attempted to push the peace process beyond the limits of NUG's policy⁵⁶⁴.

The *Likud* leader was starting his period of premiership confronting with the growth of the extreme right both inside and outside the party, and opposing Peres campaign to start an international conference sponsored by the permanent members of 'UN that would have pressured to agree on a solution based on the principle of "land for peace". In practice during his years as Prime Minister Shamir, along with the leadership of the *Likud*, kept his political ideology (inspired by Revisionist Zionism) as the major guideline of his government: his aims were to retain and conquest the regions of Judea and Samaria through a policy of expansion of the settler enterprise⁵⁶⁵. In that particular moment, the territorial attachment was sustainable and justifiable thanks to the scourge of terrorism, in Israel and all over the world. The conducting of terroristic attacks contributed on one hand, with the delegitimization of the Palestinian national cause and especially on the other one, with the reinforcement of the nationalist territorial claims in name of security.

⁵⁶² In a poll published in the Jerusalem Post (April 7th1986), the 54% wanted to keep the agreement. Moreover, Peres' chances to be able to form a narrow-based Labor-led government were very limited, due to the unwillingness of the religious party to take part to it.

⁵⁶³ Lochery N., *The Israeli...*, *ibidem*, p. 208.

⁵⁶⁴ This situation brought to a deterioration in the relationship between Shamir and Peres, with the former blaming the latter of attempting to run an alternative foreign policy to that of the NUG.

⁵⁶⁵ Morris B., *Vittime...*, *ibidem*, p 705.

The tensions and the differences within the government reached the climax with Peres' London Agreement⁵⁶⁶ of April 1987, which called for an international conference between Israel, Jordan, the United State and the Soviet Union, followed by direct negotiations between Israel and Jordan: the *Likud* was not only angry about the content of the plan but the fact that Peres had secretly negotiated the deal with Hussein in London⁵⁶⁷. When the secret negotiations between Peres and King Hussein were released to Shamir, he immediately understood that it was opening the road that would lead to the withdrawal and the transfer of Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank. For this reason, the London Agreement was consequently blocked by the PM and the *Likud* members of the inner Cabinet, this refusal provoked much bitterness in the Labor Party, especially from Peres. From this point on, the NUG was effectively finished but continued to function in order to serve the intra-party needs of both Shamir and Peres⁵⁶⁸. Unsurprisingly, the Labor leader was not happy with this situation; after the rotation was implemented his personal position was transformed from number one⁵⁶⁹ in the government to second, equal to Rabin and, after the failure of the London Agreement, to the third place.

Generally, Shamir was very coherent with his ideological perception of the world and he made the security principle the main guideline of his premiership. His revisionist legacy and his reputation of being a strong supporter of the nationalistic claims found in the security-belief a strong basis on which articulate his premiership and catalyze public support, taking also advantage on Israeli fears that had deep historical roots in the history of the Jewish people. Therefore, the existence of a siege mentality caused by Palestinian violence strengthened the position of the Israeli right among the electorate and the *Likud* benefited politically from this condition suggesting that any dialogue with the Palestinians was dangerous and unpatriotic. In 1987, the outbreak of the Intifada will challenge this ideological inflexibility and the stagnation of the government, by requiring to the political

⁵⁶⁶ The London Agreement between King Hussein of Jordan and Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Shimon Peres was signed during a secret meeting held at the residence of Lord Mishcon in London on April 11, 1987. The agreement outlined the framework for an international peace conference hosted by the UN, whose purpose would be "the peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on resolutions 242 and 338". The agreement also stipulated that the conference would not impose a solution on the parties, and that the Palestinians would be represented by the Jordanian delegation. The signatories agreed that their plan would be presented to Israeli PM Shamir as a proposal made by US Secretary of State George Shultz.

⁵⁶⁷ Peres informed Shamir of the existence of the agreement only after it had been finalized

⁵⁶⁸ Since the rotation agreement, Rabin had in effect become the senior Labor Party minister and it was in his interest to maintain the government for as long as possible.

⁵⁶⁹ Some polls showed that public support for Peres was approximately 50-60% with Shamir that instead hovered around 20%. But there is to say that despite his great success the leader of the Labor camp of was viewed with great suspicion by the Israeli public.

leadership the capability to confront with an unexpected crisis situation and to provide adequate responses to tackle it down.

4.3 The Palestinian awakening and the collapse of the status-quo

In 1987, the Palestinian national uprising, the so-called Intifada, burst out in the Occupied Territories, this event ended the Israeli perception that the status quo of the territories was eternal and opened up a harsh discussion about its future status.

The spark that ignited the rebellion was a car accident on December 9th, in which an Israeli truck driver killed 4 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip; immediately rumors were spreading the false news that the man had deliberately caused the crash to avenge the death of his brother. That event incited the Palestinian people and, in few days, the unrest spread also to the West Bank. The Occupied Territories were inundated by unprecedented popular demonstrations and spontaneous strikes: all the people, including women and children, were participating to the demonstrations burning tires, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails towards Israeli soldiers and military installations, waving the Palestinian flags. The outbreak of the Intifada was completely spontaneous and it was not organized or programmed neither by the local and nor by the Tunisian leadership; therefore, we can't say that at the origin of the overwhelming popular insurrection there was a national purpose, rather that its roots were in the miserable living conditions of the Palestinians: poverty, hatred for the occupation and especially the humiliation that the inhabitants of the Territories had endured for twenty years. Only after, during the course of the uprising those wider purposes became the act of a conscious political action and were clearly set; the ultimate goals were self-determination and the creation of an independent Palestinian State.

The revolt caught completely by surprise Israel's political leaders and the entire intelligence system, they simply were unaware of the process that was taking place under their noses; but once the revolt broke out, the whole Israeli society was forced to seriously take into consideration some alternative options to the status quo. The issue was (and still is) very controversial among Israeli society and from this harsh debate, a political shift took place towards the extreme poles on both sides of the political spectrum⁵⁷⁰: the left claimed the necessity to find a political solution, while the right reinforced the belief that the problem could be resolved just with the use of military force.

For those reasons, the Intifada also exacerbated the division within the NUG, also because no party was able to find out and to propose a clear line of action in order to handle the situation. The division was clear: Peres was in favor of a political initiative, while Shamir was inclined to tackle down the problem through the use of force; in this case the Minister of Defense Rabin had a propensity to

⁵⁷⁰ Aronoff M. J., *Power and ritual in the Israel Labor Party: a study in political anthropology*, M.E. Sharpe, 1993, p. 208.

agree with the *Likud* PM⁵⁷¹. Along with their view the real question was not based on a territorial dispute that could be resolved by making concessions, rather it was a real threat to the very existence of the State of Israel. In this case, Rabin's attitude was fundamental because he, as Minister of Defense, was the main responsible for the management of the riots; unfortunately, he didn't manage to keep a linear behavior during all the Intifada. Indeed, when the turmoil began he severely underestimate the situation, leaving for a scheduled visit to the United States and when he came back, he adopted the other extreme, ordering a large-scale use of force in order to defeat the rebellion. His purpose was to make the Palestinians understand that they wouldn't have obtained any political gain through violence. So, in order to quell the unrest, the Israeli security forces used all the means of repression available: bats, teargas, water cannons and rubber bullets, however, the unrest continued unabated, actually increasing its intensity, as a demonstration that such extreme measures were not able to handle with the situation.

Only academics understood that: «For the first time is taking place a popular action which is involving each group and social class (...) The entire population is rebelling and this is creating a national common experience⁵⁷²». Actually, the Intifada reached many more successes in few months than Arafat with years of terrorism; Shlomo Avineri remarked that: «The West Bank and the Gaza Strip under the Israeli government are a threat against which the whole forces of the IDF can't be sufficient (...) An army can defeat another army, but it can't defeat a people (...) Israel is learning that the military power has a limit⁵⁷³».

The consequences of the Intifada on Israel, its society and its political scenario were plenty. As for the tragedy of Sabra and Chatila, also the Occupied Territories were the focus of an intense media coverage, the world was shaken by the violent images of the Israeli troops shooting on demonstrators who threw stones: Israel's image will be seriously damaged and the message that emerged was that a powerful army was sent against a civilian population who was fighting for their basic rights and their right to political self-determination. All of a sudden, the biblical image of David and Goliath seemed to have reversed.

The Labor Party was affected more negatively than the *Likud*⁵⁷⁴ for two reasons: on one hand, as a short-term consequence, the Israeli public opinion started to be more hawkish, manifested this new tendency with a shift of the electorate away from the center-leftist camp and towards nationalist-

⁵⁷¹ The "iron fist" policy applied by Shamir and Rabin to suppress the uprising was applauded by the majority of Israelis, but it wasn't an effective solution to the problem: neither in the short-term nor in the long-term.

⁵⁷² Shlaim A., *The Iron Wall...*, op. cit., p.500.

⁵⁷³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁷⁴ On May 1988, *Ma'ariv* reported a survey that indicated that the support for the *Likud* was risen from 33% to 39%, while support for Labor declined from 46% to 38% during the same period.

religious parties⁵⁷⁵; on the other one, King Hussein was forced to reconsider its relation with the West Bank and in July 1988, he suddenly announced that Jordan was cutting its administrative and legal ties with the Territories in order to clarify that the East Bank was not Palestine and leaving the Palestinians to deal directly with the Israelis to decide about their own future. Now Israel was alone with the PLO and this situation blew up all the previous effort made by Peres to fulfill the envision of the Jordanian Option, on which the entire Labor approach towards the Palestinians was built (since 1967).

Another consequence of the Intifada was the birth of *Hamas*⁵⁷⁶, an Islamic movement for resistance that was founded in 1988 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. In the very beginning, the Israeli authorities encouraged this organization, in the hope that it would have weakened the secular nationalism of the PLO. However, after the uprising Hamas radicalized more and more its position and its members began to overstep the limits of legality, starting to carry out suicide attacks inside Israel in 1994. But if the Intifada radicalized Hamas, it had a calming effect on secular Palestinians as well because, the revolt raised the national morale but at the same time missed the main objective: the end the Israeli occupation and the improvement of the living conditions of the residents in the West Bank and Gaza. This is the reason why local Palestinian began to put pressure on the PLO establishment in Tunis in order to forfeit the conditions that would allow them to negotiate with Israel: the leaders in the Territories understood that a diplomatic dialogue was the only way for the Palestinians to start a peace initiative, essential in order to achieve any concrete political result.

On the Israeli side the most significant consequence of the Intifada was that it showed that the status quo was no longer a solution⁵⁷⁷. The Palestinian uprising had challenged many assumptions that were taken for granted by most Israelis (and Palestinians as well): if the short-term effect was not positive for the dovish camp of Israeli politics, the long-term effect instead the Labor Party could be advantaged only if it would be able to articulate a plausible scenario for peace, alternative to the *Likud*'s policy of perpetuation of the occupation.

⁵⁷⁵ Arian and Shamir found out that one-third of the Israelis had become more hawkish and around one-quarter more dovish, as the result of the Intifada.

⁵⁷⁶ *Hamas* or the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Harakat al-Muqāwamah al-ʾIslāmiyyah*) is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist organization. It has a social service wing, *Dawah* and a military wing, the *Izz ad-Din al-Qassam* Brigades and, since 2007, has been the governing authority of the Gaza Strip. When the movement born, in the '80s, it was a valid alternative to Fatah in the Occupied Territories, thanks to his affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood.

⁵⁷⁷ A survey conducted on June 1989 showed that only 13% of the population (16% Jews and 4% Arabs) considered the status quo a viable solution.

4.4 *HaMifleget Ha'Avoda* towards the '90s

The elections in November 1988 took place in the shadow of the Intifada. The Palestinian uprising catalyzed the attention on issues of national importance, such as: security, peace and the future of the occupied territories. During the election campaign the Labor camp chose the Peace Process as the main subject, but the issue of security had become crucial thus strengthening the position of the right-wing parties that were supporting the “iron-fist” policy in order to restore the order in the Territories. Also, the *Ha'Avoda* had been forced to rethink its political mindset in response to the withdrawal of King Hussein from the negotiations concerning the West Bank (1988); the priority was to maintain party unity and to seek a pragmatic compromise in order to place the Labor platform at the center of the Israeli political continuum in order not to be perceived as too dovish by a public opinion more and more hawkish. For this reason, the campaign was led by the party focusing on the personality of Peres and trying to create a balance between ideology and personality, to get the winning formula⁵⁷⁸.

The Palestinian revolt had caused, in the short-term, a significant shift to the right, towards more nationalistic positions; paradoxically, despite the polarization of the electorate, if we analyze the electoral results for the twelfth *Knesset* it can be said that the outcome was not clearly in favor either of the Alignment, nor of the *Likud* (even if the latter got more seats more than the first one⁵⁷⁹). Both camps lost their seats in favor of smaller, but with a more ideological, parties to the extreme right and to the extreme left of the political continuum⁵⁸⁰. But the most unexpected development in this election was the increased vote for religious parties; their growth in terms of parliamentary was around the 50% with a total of eighteen seats, thus becoming the kingmaker in the new *Knesset*⁵⁸¹. This was a symptom of disillusionment towards the secular culture identified with the two major parties with the decline of idealism many sought a new spiritual home.

President Herzog asked Shamir, leader of the largest party, to form a new NUG; despite this recommendation, the *Likud* leader tried first to form a government with a narrow majority, in collaboration with religious and ultranationalist parties. But after days of intensive negotiations,

⁵⁷⁸ Peres despite his excellent performance as PM was not able to overcome the image problem and the electorate was still hard to trust him.

⁵⁷⁹ The representation in the *Knesset* of the *Likud* had dropped from 41 to 40 seats, while the Labor Party went from 44 to 39.

⁵⁸⁰ Smootha S. and Peretz D., *Israel's Twelfth Knesset Elections: an all-loser Game*, Middle East Journal, vol.43, n. 3, 1989, p. 6.

⁵⁸¹ The lessons of 1988 indicated that there had been a shift from the two major parties. By calculating their seats won, they decreased from 85 in 1984 to 77 four years later. The decline in voting for the Labor camp was much more dramatic than the relatively static vote for *Likud* and for its allies of the extreme-right.

the secular Shamir realized that the best solution was to create a broader coalition government with Labor⁵⁸², a better partner who would give fewer problems⁵⁸³.

Peres and Rabin agreed to join the NUG, however they asked for a probationary period of nine months, within which if there had been no progress toward compromise and peace, they would have given their resignations. This decision attracted many critics, one of them pointed out that the decision to be part of the 1988 NUG (rather than going to the opposition) was taken for the great desire of power and not for ideological considerations; according to some commentators it was a dumb choice because in 1988 there were no special issues on the political agenda, as in 1984 (the withdrawal from Lebanon and inflation): this time it was just power politics⁵⁸⁴.

Against this criticism Peres had drawn up a list of five reasons that pushed him to participate in this government: the fear of a coalition led by the *Likud* which would annex the Occupied Territories, the worry that such a kind of government would try to crush the Intifada with excessive measures, avoiding the increasing polarization of Israeli society that would be accentuated with a government coalition led by religious parties and by the extreme right and finally the need to confront the economic problems of the country⁵⁸⁵. There were also other reasons, for example that the ministry of defense would be granted to Rabin, persuading him not to challenging Peres' leadership in the party⁵⁸⁶.

This time, however, the center-left camp entered as a junior partner and for that reason no Rotation Agreement was expected, Shamir would remain the PM. Peres gave up the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs in order to be Deputy PM and, above all, Minister of Finance⁵⁸⁷, while Rabin would have kept the Ministry of Defense. The main and only consequence of the formation of the NUG in 1988 was the continuation of the stalemate on the most significant issues that the nation had to face, such as the Intifada management of the.

⁵⁸² What influenced Shamir were also intra party considerations, indeed he would have preferred to assign portfolios to Labor leaders rather than to his colleagues in the *Likud*.

⁵⁸³ Shamir also saw the need for *Likud* to remain a party to the center of Israeli politics without succumbing to the extreme demands of some smaller parties that would have definitely increased the divisions within Israeli society.

⁵⁸⁴ Aronoff M. J., *Power and ritual...*, op. cit., p. 232.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 235.

⁵⁸⁶ Indeed, the position of the minister of defense in the Israeli Cabinet is more important than any other office, just behind the PM. Moreover, taking this task would have meant to have a major responsibility on peace, security and a wide control over the Occupied Territories and Israeli security policy.

⁵⁸⁷ Peres took the ministry of finance in order to save the kibbutz movement and the *Histadrut* from bankruptcy. He entered the NUG also because he felt to have the duty to safeguard these last bastions of Labor support; the price was very high not only the loss of the office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also the burden to handle the difficult Israeli economic situation.

As we have seen, the Shamir government coincided with a revolution in Palestinian political thought; the impulse of this radical change gave the occasion to Palestinian leadership to gain the self-confidence needed in order to moderate its political program. In 1988⁵⁸⁸ the PLO recognized the legitimacy of Israel by accepting all the relevant resolutions of the United Nations (242 and 338) and adopting the principle of the "two-states solution". Israel reacted very sharply to these statements: just when the Palestinians were moving towards a territorial compromise, Israel under the leadership of Shamir he was walking away.

Basically, Peres blamed the *Likud* leaders of this new development, arguing that when the *Likud* opposed the London agreement (1987) it had paved the way to new unexpected outcomes. Peres said: «Something happened and now we need to answer back⁵⁸⁹». Rabin played a major role in the formulation of this response; the Intifada had taught him some important lessons: first he realized that would not be Jordan to lead the Palestinians into the negotiating table (but that it would be exactly the opposite), second he understood that Israel would have to negotiate directly with the local Palestinian leaders and finally he came to the conclusion that the policy of Israel towards the territories could not just rest on military repression, but also it had to take political initiative⁵⁹⁰. From these considerations, the Minister of Defense came to formulate a plan in four phases which required the cessation of Palestinian violence, a period of calm from three to six months before the elections in the West Bank, negotiations with local elected leaders (and with Jordan) for a form of transition autonomy with the final status negotiations of the territories.

The pressures that came from the new US administration were decisive for the NUG; President George Bush and his Secretary of State James Baker were much less tolerant in front of the obstructionism of Shamir, compared to what they had been Reagan and Schulz against Begin. The new administration wanted to open new ways to revive the peace process and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Arens understood that in the current situation could not continue forever to pursue a stalemate but a practical solution must be formulated so, along with Rabin, he joined the American pressure to persuade the PM to make some new proposals.

⁵⁸⁸ The Algeri Declaration is the "Palestinian Declaration of Independence", a statement proclaimed by Yasser Arafat on November 15th 1988. It had previously been adopted by the Palestinian National Council, the legislative body of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

⁵⁸⁹ Shlaim A., *The Iron Wall...*, *ibidem*, p 515.

⁵⁹⁰ Rabin and Peres became much more moderate during this period. The first one thanks to the Intifada, the second one due to the failure of the Jordanian Option. Both were very pragmatic and understood the need to find a partner for negotiations. They were always very cautious regarding this ideological change because they were concerned about the electoral positioning strategy of the Labor Party

On May 14th 1989 the unthinkable happened and the Israeli prime minister presented the government a peace initiative opened to discussion and voting, the Shamir Plan⁵⁹¹. The centerpiece of the proposal mainly modeled on the plan drawn up by Rabin and the end of the debate twenty ministers voted in favor and six against. His proposal was short-lived as the PM could not resist to the fiercest opposition, which came just from his party, also because it did not waste a lot of energy to defend his plan⁵⁹², on the contrary allowed this group of opponents to force him to sink his own initiative the possibility of a clash within the central Committee of the party concerned a lot more certainty Shamir of a clash with America or the daily clashes with the Palestinians.

The point of non-return came in 1989 when during the respective months of September and October, the Egyptian President Mubarak⁵⁹³ and US Secretary of State Baker proposed two plans to revive negotiations about the Palestinian question. What remained constant was the position of continuous refusal of Shamir's (in the long run also destroyed the understanding with Rabin⁵⁹⁴) and his ministers; Meanwhile, the *Likud* seemed serious difficulty and without a clear direction. This made even the government unable to move in any direction: the PM looked to head on the road of self-destruction.

Between late 1989 and early 1990, the US Secretary of State Baker became more and more insistent and increasingly frustrated by Israeli internal clashes and the 'intransigence of their government. Meanwhile Shamir was trying to gain time by giving credit to the critics moved by his *Likud* companions, being forced to demand the fulfillment of certain preconditions in order to start negotiations: for the ministers of the Alignment these premises were unrealistic and thus impossible to meet. Coherently with the electoral campaign, the peace process became the central dividing issue used by anti-government groups present in the two camps; the consequence of this behavior was that the NUG wasn't able to take any major decision and, at that point, *Ha'Avoda* threatened to withdraw from the government if the Cabinet had not taken seriously into account at least one of the available options. The NUG was on the verge of collapse.

⁵⁹¹ The document was not really Shamir's, but it was more an expression of the new minister of foreign affairs' approach. Specifically, the peace process would have been formulated on the basis of the Camp David agreements and on the UN resolutions 242 and 338.

⁵⁹² A rebellion started in the *Likud*. The "constrainer Ministers" led by Sharon were accusing Shamir to bring Israel to ruin.

⁵⁹³ His plan was structured in ten points and mainly concerned the issue of the Palestinian elections and the acceptance of the "land for peace" formula by Israel. That proposal did not provide for a participation of the PLO in negotiations, neither for an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, nor for the formation of a Palestinian state.

⁵⁹⁴ The most important relationship in the NUG was the one between Rabin and Shamir. It was the cornerstone around which the broader coalition was surviving.

But we must keep in mind that Peres was reluctant to leave the government and call new elections because he knew he could risk the loss of its leading position within the Labor Party, in fact there were considerations about the fact that a break of government could lead to a real challenge for the leadership in the party between Rabin and Peres. It was known that the Defense Minister was the most popular in the Cabinet and even some doves within the Labor Party believed that Rabin represented the best hope to take out the party from the NUG and to lead it to electoral victory. Once again, the Alignment was again forced to face a perennial dilemma: stay or leave the coalition. Yossi Sarid challenged his former colleagues saying Labor: «Be honest with yourself, turn away from this government and tell the public what you know to be the truth: there can't be peace without the PLO and without a withdrawal from the territories. Believe it or not, you could also have a chance to win⁵⁹⁵ ».

On March 13, 1990 Shamir told the Cabinet: «Peres asked me to dissolve this government and has undermined the foundations unjustly accusing the government of not advancing the peace process. This situation leaves me no choice but to end his service in this government⁵⁹⁶». Immediately after the ten Alignment ministers presented their collective resignation, even going out to them by the ruling coalition and two days later the Labor Party put on the agenda of the *Knesset* a motion of no confidence in the government: the motion was approved by 60 votes in favor and 55 against. Shamir was thus the first PM in the history of Israel to fall for a parliamentary no-confidence vote. One of the main reasons why the Labor Party broke its coalition with *Likud* was to avoid to be the witness of the consequences derived from Shamir's intransigent attitude towards the peace initiatives of those years.

After six weeks Shamir was able to put together a narrow coalition with the support of the religious and two ultranationalist parties: it was the most right-oriented government in the whole history of Israel, as well as the more extreme regarding Arabs-Jews relations. This executive would lead Israel for two years until the turning point of 1992 elections.

In 1988 the Labor camp seemed unchanged and fatigued; If the Labor Party wanted to win back voters was necessary that risked in the electoral competition articulating a vision of the nation to explain the opportunities created by new realities and articulating policies that could realistically relate to these new conditions, although violated aspects that always were considered a taboo (such as negotiating with the PLO). Only by taking this risk, it would be possible to stand out from the *Likud*⁵⁹⁷.

⁵⁹⁵ Aronoff M. J., *Power and ritual...*, *Ibidem*, p. 213

⁵⁹⁶ Shlaim A., *The Iron Wall...*, *ibidem*, p 519.

⁵⁹⁷ With its participations to the NUGs the Labor party was becoming nothing more than a reflection of the *Likud*. Those years were a fundamental opportunity for the younger generation within the party to influence the internal ideological debate.

This period would be fundamental for the Labor Party itself because it saw the start of a process of change in both the *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* and the Israeli political system which were to culminate in Labor's election victory in 1992⁵⁹⁸. Indeed, in those years some reforms were introduced inside the Labor camp: the most important one was the adoption of primaries, in order to open up the method by which party candidates were chosen. The reforms were proposed by Uzi Baram, the party's Secretary-General, who believed in a stage by stage process of democratization: with the primaries all the members were to be given a chance to vote for their candidates.

The principal aim of the reform was to present a *Knesset* list more representative of party electorate and of Israeli society as a whole, increasing the electoral appeal of the party. An important factor that contributed to the internal acceptance of the reforms was a relative breakdown in party discipline; this was the result of the decision taken by the party's large majority to participate to the NUG. This participation launched a growing confidence process in the younger generation, which resulted in the formation of a more independent parliamentary faction, who strongly supported Baram and thus his program. At the end both Peres and Rabin accepted the idea after expressing initial concerns over it; this change of heart took place when it became clear that the primary system would not have radically altered the balance of power within the party and when it soon became apparent that Baram's proposal was extremely popular, not only within the Labor but also with the electorate.

In conclusion we can see the major changes that began to take place within the Labor Party from 1988 onwards, concerning the ideological change, a generational challenge and an internal process of democratization. This revolutionary process was motivated by the need to respond to the transformations of Israeli political scenario and by the desire to achieve a main objective: bring back the Labor Party to power.

⁵⁹⁸ Aronoff M. J., *Power and ritual...*, *Ibidem*, p. 240.

Chapter 5. MIFLEGET HA'AVODA AND THE RABIN ERA (1991-1995)

By the end of the 1990s, the fate of the Palestinian territories had become one of the most important issues in the country's consciousness, destined to divide into opposite sides those who nourished almost antithetic ideas. In order to give a more specific methodological framework, it must be said that the aim of this chapter is to highlight the importance of the historical (international and domestic) framework, which is the active context where the events of 1992 elections and then of the Oslo Process could take place.

As we did in the previous chapters, these historical events are not the main focus of our discourse, but they are functional to our analysis of the Israeli political scene and society; rather these two issues are pivotal to this work because they allow to catch the dynamics between Israeli voters, *Miflagat Ha'avodah* and the development of the negotiations with the Palestinians. This last aspect is not taken as the core-subject of this chapter, for this reason the analysis of the Oslo Process (from 1992 to 1995) is not detailed in itself, because the purpose is not to show the entire development of the peace talks, neither to illustrate the state of the art.

Thus, what it is reported is an attempt to give a clearer idea of the cause-effect mechanism between the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, public opinion building-process and electoral outcome (more precisely regarding Labor Party's performance) in Israel.

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5.1 Israel in the Nineties: between normalization and new waves of immigration

By the end of its first fifty years, Israel has been transformed from a country whose symbol was the Jewish pioneer blowing and sowing his fields (in accordance with the Zionist idea) into an industrialized country, proud of its cutting-edge high-tech industry. Moreover, the privatization trend, began in the Eighties, continued gaining momentum; the *Histadrut*-owned companies, the *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* were used to operate in a framework of state-subsidized credit, but once the state shifted away from direct guidance of capital market, those enterprises were unable to operate in an expensive-credit market and faced bankruptcy.

Israel was changing, adapting to globalization; it was no longer a land of socialist pioneers, but was formed by people who wanted to enjoy the benefits of a normal life, like most of the Western consumerism countries, so the economy was not to consider anymore as a secondary matter and it has become harder and harder to justify to ordinary citizens billions of dollars that were being poured into Judea and Samaria: the age of ideology was ended.

The peace process brought about a significant weakening of the Arab boycott of Israel and contact with other countries in the region led to economic projects and encouraged growth; Western European countries that before the peace process had reservations about Israel's policy toward the Palestinians now discovered Israel and became more open to contact with it. During these years the state balance of payments, which had been one of the weaker points of the economy, went from negative to positive (thanks also to its dependence on US aid and the Jewish donations); so Israel's reliability in the world credit market attracted international investors and during that period the standard of living rose, but creating also a growing gap between the richest and the poorest⁵⁹⁹. From one of the world more egalitarian societies in the Sixties, Israel turned into one of the least egalitarian in the Nineties.

The revolution took place also in the social climate, changing basic element of Israeli society (stable domicile and place of work, closeness to the extended family, children's group that stayed together from kindergarten to the army): the entire range of familial connections that made people feel rooted in their place and society was suddenly undermined and, although there was greater opportunity and higher standard of living, something important had been lost.

As a result, Israelis' exposure to one another had diminished; each social group shut itself up in its own neighborhood and in its own home. Thus, the rise in the standard of living had led citizens to becoming alienated and distanced from one another.

On a cultural level, the introduction of multi-channel television allowed American culture (the universal culture without roots) to penetrate in Israel; the demise of Zionist-Socialist ideology created a vacuum which was hard to fill but, in a way, it affirmed the success of Zionism's program of normalizing the Jews to be like other people. The sense of security and loss of existential fears, the death of idealism and ideology, the appearance of a generation with no past and no future, solely interested in the present, were all elements of these "normalization"⁶⁰⁰. In this domestic context, massive wave of immigrants arrived from the Former Soviet Union. One of Gorbachev's first acts in 1989 was to reform Russia's emigration policy: Russian Jews could now leave the country and between 1990 and 2000, about 900,000 people immigrated to Israel, thus increasing the population by 15%⁶⁰¹. This influx brought immigration to the highest historical levels (385.00 immigrants in 1990-1991, followed by an annual average inflow of 65,000/70,000 people from 1992 to 1997). The big difference between immigrants of this *aliyah* with respect to the previous migratory waves, layed in these underlying reasons: if politics, ideology and culture prevailed until the 1970s, in those hours economic considerations gained momentum, indeed: «In the last ten years the main motivation to

⁵⁹⁹ The two main pockets of poverty were the ultra-orthodox and the Arab population.

⁶⁰⁰ Shapira A., *Israel...*, op.cit., p. 453.

⁶⁰¹For the sake of accuracy between 1989 and 2000, 886,292 citizens of the former USSR entered Israel, accounting for 84.2% of the total number of immigrants in that period.

leave former URSS (or Russia) was no longer a question of identity or even adherence to the values of the Zionist movement⁶⁰²».

The arrival of such large number of people in the country had caused some side-effects which reverberated not only on the new-comers, but also on hosts; particularly regarding the management of cultural integration. Indeed, this group of immigrants (one million people) was very attached to the Russian traditions and culture; their identity⁶⁰³ has always remained homogeneous and Judaism is considered, by many of them, a major aspect of its history, but not the only one, still feeling connected with their land of origin whose language, traditions and habits were still preferred by the Russian immigrants in Israel. It is an intersection of the collective patrimony, with a personal Jewish dimension, that in the choice of immigrating to Israel has found a new dimension.

The Russian immigrants' desire to preserve Russian culture within a Russian-speaking community did not encounter criticism from the establishment. This could have been a sign of a more pluralistic society, that looked with more tolerance the immigrants but this habit reflected also the trend regarding collapse of the cultural hegemony of the first Israel, which became a divided society with no basic consensus on values.

Israel's response was entrusted with new immigration policies, different from those applied in previous migratory waves, based on a criterion, called the "direct absorption"⁶⁰⁴; if previously the government and public administrations were asked to direct and support the *olim*, both in the house and Labor market, in the Nineties this process had to rely on the free market, opting for a kind of spontaneous fluctuation of demand and supply. In a first phase, therefore, the immigrants could choose and, as a result, many of them settled down in the most central and urbanized areas of the country; only at the beginning of 1991, it was decided to intervene by facilitating the dispersal of the Russian population in peripheral districts: this need encountered *Likud* essential belief to settle the West Bank and Gaza, but this intention collided with the opinion of the new-comers who were far less inclined to this vision, lacking of any ideological or even pioneering motivation. Despite this, the costs of absorption still remained and the amount of money needed in order to integrate a family of three persons was around \$62.000⁶⁰⁵. Accordingly, Israel asked the Bush administration for \$10 billion of loan guarantees spread over a five-year period⁶⁰⁶.

⁶⁰² Goldkorn W., *La scelta di Abramo. Identità ebraiche e post-modernità*, Bollati Boringhieri, 2006, p.22.

⁶⁰³ Three are the strains of origin: the Asian and Crimean regions; Ashkenazi Jews from the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Moldova and the territories acquired by the USSR after the Second World War; Ashkenazi Jews resident in the territories already belonging to the Soviet Union before 1939 (Belarus, Russia and Ukraine).

⁶⁰⁴ Shapira A., *Israel...*, op.cit., p. 455.

⁶⁰⁵ Shindler C., *The Land Beyond Promise...*, op. cit., p. 265.

⁶⁰⁶ Washington immediately understood the real significance of this mass immigration and that it could be used as a lever to extract concessions from the Shamir government regarding the Middle East peace process.

By 1991, the cost of the houses for the Soviet Jews had become a major source of tension in US-Israel relations; Baker complained on several occasions that Israel had not supplied the necessary information on its settlement policy, showing a report by the US State Department which estimated that 4% of the 185.000 Jews who had immigrated in 1990 had settled in the Territories⁶⁰⁷; this compared with the figure of less than 1% which the Israeli government had put forward.

Ariel Sharon, the Minister of Housing Construction, developed settlements near Jerusalem (such as Ma'ale Adumin) and by then it was difficult to differentiate between these settlements and the outlying suburbs of Jerusalem. Since 1967, a belt of settlements including French Hill and Gilo had already effectively expanded Jerusalem area. Since Arik had become Minister, the number of units planned for the Territories had increased fourfold; an analysis of the annual population growth in West Bank and Gaza showed that the under Shamir there had been a marked increase compared to the Begin era⁶⁰⁸. But, even if Shamir wished to downplay the expansion of the settlements program, the far right would have not allowed it. For this reason, Washington was able to block the loan guarantees the prime minister asked for.

Another element of potential friction with the new immigrants was the high rate of schooling and the high professional profile: highly qualified people, who had considerably increased the human potential of Israel, whose Labor market earned nearly 100,000 engineers, more than 43,000 teachers, about 20,000 doctors and as many writers, poets, journalists and musicians⁶⁰⁹. This level of skills demanded to be recognized and appreciated, generating expectations that were not always met. Moreover, the new immigrants had a strong identification with their work, due to the fact that it represented one of the key factors in defining one's own identity as an element of differentiation in a society such as the Soviet Union, where there could be no diversity of wealth or lifestyle.

The integration of the Russian component into the Israeli Labor market was therefore not easy; until 1992, the unemployment rate remained high (42%, while in 1996 it had already fallen to 16%⁶¹⁰), both for the lack of professional outlets and for the initial refusal of the new-comers to perform tasks below their training. An adequate response was given only since 1993, in conjunction with the peace process promoted by the Labor government and the American concession of loan guarantees for access to international credit.

⁶⁰⁷ Including the suburbs in and around East Jerusalem.

⁶⁰⁸ In 1991, it was announced the construction of 2.150 units, with the addition of another 4.670 buildings, by the end of the same year.

⁶⁰⁹ Vercelli C., *Israele. Storia...*, op.cit., p. 347.

⁶¹⁰ To have more data and information about the immediate impact of the Russian *aliyah* on Israeli politics see Reich B., Dropkin N. and Wurmser M., *Soviet Jewish Immigration and the 1992 Israeli Knesset Elections*, Middle East Journal, vol. 47, n.3, Summer 1993.

If long-term economic reflections have turned out to be very positive, things have gone differently on a cultural level; the new Russian community, while oscillating between integration and complete isolation, opposed a clear refusal to an assimilationist perspective, thus giving life to a complex of material institutions, attitudes, and conduct, which are property of this Russian enclave, in this way a dense network of websites, newspapers, periodicals, clubs, radios, magazines was developed.

The community's cohesiveness and internal communication were an excellent foundation for the development of political organizations and the influence of the Russian *aliyah* on elections results was felt as early as 1992, when the Soviet vote was estimated to count for 8 or 9 MKs⁶¹¹. Even if there were those who believed that they would have chosen the right side of the *Knesset* from the start, in the 1992 they mostly voted for the Rabin-led coalition, assuring Labor's victory, but during the Nineties, their support will swing among the two political camps

Indeed, the following years, their support allowed Netanyahu in 1996 and Barak in 1999 to form their governments, a strong indication of the weight the Russian vote has on the country's internal balance. Simultaneously to Prime Minister Brak's victory in 1999, *Yisrael Beiteinu*⁶¹² (Israel's home) was founded by Avigdor Lieberman appeared and got 4 MKs which, together with the other seats gained by the other Russian-speaking parties, reached 12 MKs total.

Notwithstanding their debut in Israeli politics was marked by a leftist preference, during time, Israelis of Russian origin have matured a mostly political position on the right, especially with regard to relations with the neighboring Arab states and the negotiating path with the Palestinians. This attitude of Russian electorate in Israel is linked with their cultural and historical origins; coming from Former Soviet Union, from the former Zarist Empire, they were used to shared images of strong nations with an extended hegemony and a powerful role in the international arena. When they came to Israel, their political vision was still soaked with that type or rhetoric which they wanted to be concretize also in the Israeli experience. From these premises comes a claustrophobic perception of the small Israeli territory and a consequent desire to make Israel a strong and secure state within the region, preserving its territorial integrity.

5.2 The advent of a new scenario: Labor's chance to come back to power

Israeli policy, like the Palestinian one, saw substantial evolutions in the late 1980s; significant was the fact that this shift took place under Shamir's government, with an extreme right-wing orientation which, was not inclined to change the status quo through negotiations.

⁶¹¹ Shindler C., *The Land Beyond Promise...*, op. cit., p.277.

⁶¹² As we will see later, Lieberman's real success was recorded during the 2006 elections, where he had 11 seats, thus entering the majority of government.

On the Palestinian side, the intifada had imposed a choice: the PLO forced to observe at a distance what was happening in the Territories was at risk of being excluded from decision-making. Moreover, some intellectual currents had already realized the need to move forward with the rhetoric of the past⁶¹³, understanding how the use of force could not solve anything: it was not a pacifist turn, but an act of realism⁶¹⁴. To encourage this change of attitude also contributed the American pressure that demanded Yasser Arafat a recovery of clear positive signs capable of encouraging an evolution of the dialogue.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 decreed the collapse of URSS and the United States became the only superpower; this context, together with the consequences of the Gulf War and Israel's commitment to absorbing the flow of Soviet immigrants, made possible the creation of a more favorable environment to open a new dialogue. Moreover, the interlocutors (especially Israelis) were particularly sensitive to American economic aid; Washington was conscious about the power of this economic lever and played all its power to bring Shamir to the negotiations of the 1991 Madrid Conference. Although the plenary sessions and the following bilateral talks did not decide anything, it was the first official meeting between an Israeli delegation and a Palestinian, in an international context.

In addition, the Shamir government had to face one major security threat, in the second half of 1990: the crisis triggered by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Initially, the Persian Gulf crisis had clouded the intifada but this international conflict ended up provoking serious repercussion in the Israeli-Palestinian question⁶¹⁵; indeed, in the public debate, the Gulf crisis was increasingly linked to the solution of the Palestinian problem, thus giving rise to a new term: linkage.

In April of that year, Saddam Hussein threatened to use chemical weapons to destroy Israel if it would have dared to attack Iraq. Several incidents had convinced the Iraqi leader that an Israeli conspiracy was underway to sabotage its nuclear program, an idea that was heavily fueled by the Israeli airstrike attack in 1981 to the Osirak reactor. Hussein's threat was thus directed at deterring any military initiative by the Jewish state.

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Israel Air Force (IAF) was put on precautionary alert, however the intelligence leaders did not feel that the maneuvers of Saddam's troops were a real threat for Israel; however, the *Likud* used the invasion to support its main claim, that there were far more dangerous and destabilizing elements in the Middle East than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by itself.

⁶¹³ We are referring to the declaration made in 1989 by the PLO, declaring the establishment of a Palestinian State on the basis of the UN resolutions 181 and 242.

⁶¹⁴ Vercelli C., *Israele...*, op.cit., p. 369.

⁶¹⁵ Shlaim A., *Il Muro di Ferro...*, op.cit., p. 520.

There was a comeback to a rhetoric that had been typical of Menachem Begin's era, in this perspective, very soon Saddam Hussein was compared to Adolf Hitler and, consequently, the invasion of the small Kuwait state to the aggression led by Nazi Germany against Poland at the beginning of the Second World War. Such an analogy made this conflict to fall into a pattern involving Israeli perception of this war as a battle for their survival, in this way the government felt legitimized to claim the intervention of the western countries, particularly the United States, in order to stop the Iraqi dictator.

In the meanwhile, also the Western world demanded the Iraqi dictator to stop the invasion; the military intervention came after the formation of an international coalition led by US and composed by numerous Arab states. One of the peculiarities of this Middle Eastern crisis was that Israel found itself alongside several countries, which were its sworn enemies (for example, Syria). There was, however, a big difference between the intentions of coalition members: the majority of them wanted the end of Iraqi aggression, the restoration of the political status quo and the containment of Iraq; Israel instead wanted the annihilation of Saddam Hussein's military resources.

The crisis began on August 12th the Iraqi leader suggested that Iraq could retreat from Kuwait if Israel would have withdrawn from all occupied Arab territories and Syria from Lebanon⁶¹⁶. It was exactly this proposal that introduced the concept of linkage in the Middle Eastern diplomatic lexicon and from that very moment, all of a sudden, Saddam became the hero of the Arab masses and the savior of the Palestinians. The Iraqi leader tried to link his actions with the wider Arab-Israeli conflict stating repeatedly that his invasion was in support of the Palestinian cause and in opposition to American and Zionist imperialism⁶¹⁷; these declarations were stated in order to attract the maximum consent possible among the Arab world, which had found itself divided on the issue. Although this ploy failed to attract Arab states away from the alliance with the Western world, Saddam's stock among Palestinians rose considerably, until Arafat cast his lot with the Iraqi leader and the pro-Iraq coalition. This decision was influenced by popular sentiment throughout the Palestinian Diaspora, as well as within the Territories; Palestinian sympathy for Saddam was mainly the result of the fatigue and frustration felt by the Palestinian community after three years of intifada, which contributed to the embrace of an Arab leader who was prepared to stand up against the United States and Israel⁶¹⁸.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 522.

⁶¹⁷ In what became known as the "Mother of all Battles" speech, Saddam spoke of the eventual victory of Iraqi forces that would open the doors for the liberation of the beloved Palestine Lebanon and Golan. Then Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock will be released from bondage.

⁶¹⁸ Finkelstein N., *Palestinian Attitudes during the Gulf War*, Journal of Palestine Studies, vol.21, n.3, Spring 1992, p.54-70.

Arafat's support for Saddam Hussein created a deep sense of disillusionment among Israeli peace movement. Faisal Husseini⁶¹⁹, Sari Nusseibeh⁶²⁰ and the other Palestinian leaders, with whom they Israeli peace movement had developed a closer relationship, did little to lessen the shock: they too sympathized with the overwhelming pro-Saddam mood. Yossi Sarid, an outstanding leader of the Israeli doves, expressed the sentiment of the Israeli left with these words: «One needs a gas mask to overcome the poisonous and repellent stench emitted by the pro-Saddam position adopted by the PLO. [...] It is not only disgusting but also a grave strategic mistake, since Saddam will betray the Palestinians as soon as they are no longer of service to him. The occupation of Kuwait provided Shamir the best of vindication for his annexationist policies, since he legitimated violent occupation of territories[...]. As far as Sarid was concerned: «Until further notice the Palestinians can count me out⁶²¹».

5.2.1. Waiting into the sealed rooms, dancing on the rooftops

On November 29th, the Resolution 687 was approved by the Security Council, authorizing the use of all the necessary means against Iraq, unless the latter would have withdrawn from Kuwait by January 15th, 1991. At that point, consultations between UN and Israel intensified with the approaching deadline for Iraqi retreat; it was crucial for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to refrain from taking unilateral action against Iraq. Shamir then promised Bush not to launch preventive attacks and to consult the Pentagon before responding to any Iraqi aggression. To facilitate coordination, a direct line (codename, Hammer Rick) was created between Washington and the Israeli Defense Ministry: all this encouraged Tel Aviv to maintain a low profile and to refrain from creating further tensions⁶²².

As the likelihood of war increased, Israel began to implement measures in order to protect the population from the threat of Iraqi missile attacks, including the possible use of chemical warheads. On October 1st, the Shamir government decided reluctantly to distribute to the civilian population

⁶¹⁹ Husseini was an important Palestinian politician, who went to work for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) upon its establishment in Jerusalem. Later on, he served as a Palestinian spokesperson and as head of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference. Subsequently he became head of the Fatah faction in the West Bank, and Palestinian Authority Minister without Portfolio.

⁶²⁰ He is a Palestinian Professor of Philosophy and former President of the Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. Until December 2002 he was the representative of the Palestinian National Authority. He achieved a Ph.D on Islamic Philosophy at Harvard University in 1978. He has long been viewed as a Palestinian moderate. In 2008, Nusseibeh said that the quest for the two-state solution was floundering. He called on Palestinians to start a debate on the idea of a one-state solution

⁶²¹ *Ha'aretz*, August 17th 1990.

⁶²² *Ma'ariv*, (insert), March 29th 1991.

anti-gas masks: for a nation obsessed with the remembrance of the Nazi gas chambers this was a very delicate question. The IDF also provided Israelis with instructions that recommended to seal one room in every house or apartment against possible chemical contamination and on hearing the air raid siren shut themselves inside it and put on their gas masks. *Mamad* (the acronym for Protected Home Space), entered the Israeli lexicon and the public went through the realization that the danger of a missile attack was genuine.

On the evening of January 17th, Scud missiles began crashing into the suburbs of Tel Aviv; it was the first air strike in an Israeli city after 1948 and, by the end of the forty-days US led air-land campaign against Iraq, forty-three missiles had hit Israel. The primary effect of the attacks was psychological: night after night, for six weeks, millions of Israelis went to bed with the knowledge that they might be awakened by sirens signaling another missile. The feeling of vulnerability reminded many of the helplessness Jews experienced during the Holocaust⁶²³.

The Cabinet was gathered urgently and the prevailing opinion was to respond back to the Iraqi attack, but the prime minister was very resolute to maintain the agreement with made with Bush and he closed the meeting saying he was opposed to any action that did not foresee coordination with Washington⁶²⁴; his position remained unchanged throughout the conflict and this was his main argument against military intervention⁶²⁵.

Shamir's predisposition (both by character and by political attitude) to inactivity, resistance to external pressures and maintenance of the status quo, did not give him any plaudit as a leader of a nation in war instead, what came to light was the defense establishment's inadequacy to protect the civilian population. It was mainly this factor that transformed the first weeks of 1991 into a psychological trial for the Israeli population. Notwithstanding this, the overwhelming majority of the public supported the decision taken by Shamir to abstain from answering back⁶²⁶ because they were aware of the importance of Israeli restraint in order to obtain American support⁶²⁷ once the war would have ended. Shamir's fellow citizens well understood the reasons their *Prime Minister* had for his containment policy, but they felt the need for a leader to support them, guide them and keep them united in time of crisis; unfortunately all they got from Shamir was a frosty silence: «Maybe we

⁶²³ No one died for the direct explosion of a Scud missile, but many people died of a heart attack or because they forgot to open the anti-gas mask air valve; even if the missiles never caused one victim directly, the psychological impact of the attack was profound.

⁶²⁴ M., *Broken Covenant* and Barzilai A., *The Fateful Saturday*, *Ha'aretz*, January 13th 1995.

⁶²⁵ *Ma'ariv*..., op. cit., and *Ha'aretz*, February 13th 1991.

⁶²⁶ Polls taken by the Scud attacks showed that 80% of those surveyed supported the "restraint/non-retaliation" policy. Katz E. and Levinson H., *Public Opinion in Wartime*, Israel Institute of Applied Social Research, February 20th 1990.

⁶²⁷ Bush asked Shamir to remain still and out of the battle ground, in order to avoid embarrassing the Arab allies, members of the coalition.

do not deserve someone like Churchill, but do us a favor first Minister: say something⁶²⁸», a journalist wrote.

This posture was maintained also despite the complaints made by several hawkish strategists, who were concerned that Israel's inaction might be misinterpreted by Baghdad as a sign of passive defense, and therefore eroding the IDF's deterrent power. In order to overcome this possibility, Shamir released very hard statements in those days, whose content could be summarized in the warning that an eventual Iraqi attack with chemical weapons would have caused the Israeli nuclear response. The prime minister did nothing to contradict this interpretation of his statements, seemingly satisfied that the message was spread in these terms by the international press⁶²⁹.

When the missiles started to fall, Israeli media reports of joyous Palestinian reactions to the attacks disturbed and angered Israeli public. It was reported that during the Scud attacks, Palestinians in the Territories climbed on their roofs to watch cheering as the missiles passed overhead on their way to Tel Aviv. Some of these reports were indeed accurate, but the phenomenon was rarer than many journalists claimed. While Shamir continued to resist all attempts to associate the Gulf conflict with the Palestinian question, PLO leadership seriously compromised its international image; greeting Saddam as their champion, the Palestinians were venturing out the frustrations that had accumulated in the previous two years. The Shamir government took the opportunity to use Palestinian rhetoric and the anti-Israeli rhetoric used as a further rejection to negotiate with PLO. The weeks preceding the Gulf War and during the missile attacks were not propitious for peace activities; people's minds were preoccupied with the prospect of war and the Palestinian betrayal brought the credibility of the peace movement agenda into question: Israelis never forgave the Palestinians for dancing on their rooftops as Saddam's missiles hurtled above on their way to Tel Aviv.⁶³⁰ The peace activists were encouraged, however, by the prospect for renewal of the peace process once the war would have been ended. With the United States grateful for the support of its Arab allies and for Israeli restraint, the Bush Administration was widely expected to undertake a new Arab-Israel peace initiative, as soon as the war was won.

Meanwhile, the Desert Storm operation had reached its goals: Iraqi forces had been forced to abandon Kuwait and the legitimate government of this country had been re-established. On February 28, President Bush ordered the ceasefire.

Within six months of the end of the Gulf crisis, the Americans were trying very hard to start negotiations for the Arab-Israeli conflict, but the atmosphere in Territories was still inflamed by

⁶²⁸ Samet G., *Even If We Have No Churchill*, *Ha'aretz*, January 25th 1995.

⁶²⁹ Margalit D., *The Name of the Game-There is No Alternative*, *Ha'aretz*, October 3rd 1991.

⁶³⁰ Polls taken in 1990 showed a decline in the support for the negotiations with the PLO, from a high 37% in April, to 22% in August and 24% in November and December. Katz E., Levinson H. and Al-Hajj M., *Attitudes of Israelis (Jews and Arabs) toward Current Affairs*, Israel Institute of Applied Social Research, January 10th 1991.

Palestinian extremists; so, an increasing number of Israelis could be heard calling for *hafrada* (separation); the degree of acceptance of the idea of a separation grew, along with the fact that the concept of a Palestinian state was more palatable⁶³¹. *Shalom Aksciav* (Peace Now⁶³²) tried to capitalize on this new mood and came out with a new slogan *Lhipared Leshalom*⁶³³ (Let us separate in peace).

5.3 What was started in Madrid?

Two major events allowed the United States to promote the Madrid peace conference on October 30th 1991: the collapse of the Former Soviet and the defeat of Iraq during the Gulf War. Basically, the fall of the Soviet bloc took away the support the Arab states had so far enjoyed in opposing any form of agreement with Israel, while the controversial support for Saddam declared by Jordan and PLO had put these two actors in a very unfavorable position in their relationships with US. The idea was to hold an international conference under the auspices of the United States and Russia, attended by Arab States, Israel, the UN and the European Community, in order to find a new approach to move on negotiations for peace in Middle East.

Yitzhak Shamir was the most difficult leader to convince and strong US pressures were needed to make him accept the invitation; notwithstanding his participation, the prime minister, meanwhile, announced a plan for a new wave of construction that would have doubled the Jewish population in occupied territories within four years⁶³⁴. This shift explained clearly the strategy of the Israeli leader: on one hand attending to the conference in order to please Bush and, on the other one, carry on the settlement project in order to keep his government together.

During the summer of 1991 it appeared that Shamir's resistance to an international conference was weakening; this was a response not only to US pressure, but also to Israeli public opinion. After four years of intifada most Israelis had come to the conclusion that the uprising could not be suppressed⁶³⁵. In one poll 92% supported Shamir's decision to go to Madrid, although only 56%

⁶³¹ Bar-On M., *In Pursuit...*, op. cit., p. 284.

⁶³² It was founded in March 1978, in an act known to the Israeli public as "The Officer's Letter." Following the visit of Egypt's President, Anwar Sadat, to the Prime Minister of Israel, Menachem Begin, calling upon the government to make sure this opportunity for peace was not lost. Its mission calls for peace agreements between Israel and its neighbors. In particular, regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the organizations work in order to promote among Israelis the idea of two states, meaning the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

⁶³³ Peace Now Archive, *Peace Now Newsletter*, n.4, 1991 file, March 1991.

⁶³⁴ Shlaim A., *Il Muro di Ferro...*, op.cit., p.533.

⁶³⁵ Katz E. and Levinson H., *What Israelis Agree About?*, Israel Institute of Applied Social Research, published in *Yediot Aharonot*, June 21st 1991. The headline stated: «Polls:75% support returning Territories in exchange of a peace agreement».

expected that the conference would result in peace. The question of territorial compromise in exchange of peace still divided the nation into roughly equal halves, for and against.

However, in a poll conducted in November 1991, the question “if the establishment of a Palestinian State turned out to be the last obstacle to peace, would you agree to concede?” produced the unprecedented 84% affirmative response⁶³⁶. Despite this, most Israelis remained uncertain about the true meaning of Madrid: «Every Israeli has a Citizens Right Movement and a *Likud* party in his head and now they can no longer ignore the debate between them⁶³⁷».

Instead, the real debate within *Likud* was whether Israel should participate in these peace talks and, if so, with whom this dialogue should take place. During a party meeting, Moshe Arens⁶³⁸ recalled the article written in 1923 by Jabotinsky, arguing that negotiations had to be made with the Arab neighbors in search of an agreement, but only after an iron wall had been built. Arens went on to say that this wall had already been built and that the Jewish presence could no longer be canceled. For this reason, he was in favor of opening up a dialogue with the Palestinians and talking to them about a transitional agreement that would have been concluded on following the Camp David's pattern⁶³⁹.

Most likely, the heaviest factor concurring to the decision taken by Yitzhak Shamir's government to attend Madrid was Israel's economic vulnerability; his dependence on American funding for the absorption of massive Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union provided President Bush with unprecedented influence⁶⁴⁰: «If there was to be an American moment in the Middle East, this was surely it⁶⁴¹». The Madrid Conference was thought in order to foster bilateral talks between Israel and the major Arab states (Egypt, Syria and Jordan) and with the aim to regional context; regarding the Israeli-Palestinian question, Washington set as essential conditions for the negotiations the UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, together with the “land for peace” principle.

For the first time, the Palestinians were represented on an egalitarian plan with Israel and the mere presence of official Palestinian representative, even if inside the Jordanian delegation, constituted a change in the Israeli basic refusal to consider the counterpart as a valuable partner⁶⁴². Moreover, the

⁶³⁶ Published in *Yediot Ahronot*, November 29, 1991. Other polls appeared in that period, confirming the general mood inclined to compromise: *Hadashot*, November 1st 1991 and *Yediot Ahronot*, November 8th 1991.

⁶³⁷ Professor Yaron Ezrahi quoted in Bar-On M., *In Pursuit...*, op. cit., p. 292, from an interview in the *Washington Post*, December 24th 1991.

⁶³⁸ He was a *Likud* politician, member of the *Knesset* between 1973/1992 and again from 1999 until 2003. He served as minister of defense three times and once as minister of foreign affairs.

⁶³⁹ Arens M., *Broken Covenant...*, op. cit., p. 223.

⁶⁴⁰ The American president refused to grant the \$ 10 million loan required by Shamir, thus pushing Israel to attend the negotiating table.

⁶⁴¹ Miller A. D., *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*, Bantam Books, 2008, p.14.

⁶⁴² The Israeli veto in the presence of PLO members and residents of East Jerusalem settled in a Palestinian delegation embedded in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

presence of Presidents Bush and Gorbachev, in addition to representatives of the UN and the European Community, provided a dramatic validation of the seriousness of the conference.

Shamir traveled to Madrid distrustfully and this attitude clearly manifested itself in his opening speech, which was anachronistic, saturated of past rhetoric and full of anti-Arab clichés; what the Israeli Prime Minister declared was so inadequate for the occasion that was dangerously close to the complete refusal of the conference's pre-conditions. The contrast with Haidar Abdel Shafi's speech, head of the Palestinian delegation, could not be more evident by substance and spirit. His discourse, though briefly referring to the past, looked to the future: «In the name of the Palestinian people, we want to turn directly to the Israeli people, with whom we have long shared the sufferings: let us share hope instead. We are willing to live side by side on the earth and on the promise of the future. To share, however, the two parties must be considered to be equal. [...]. Your security and ours are mutually dependent, as intertwined as are the fears and the nightmares of our children⁶⁴³». As he advanced the claim of a Palestinian sovereignty, Shafi also defined it in two fundamental ways: accepting the need for a transitional phase and imagining the creation of a confederation between independent Palestine and Jordan.

The PLO, because of its internal divisions and the limits of inter-Arab politics, had never been able to articulate such a clear opening to the peace with Israel; in that situation the goal was to convince Israeli public opinion of the sincere Palestinian commitment in a peaceful coexistence. Probably this marked Palestinian openness has contributed to highlight Shamir's poor performance, which raised harsh questions about the ability of *Likud*'s leaders to work for a true agreement with the Palestinians.

After the plenary session ended, the second phase of the conference began, which took shape in a series of five separate bilateral meetings between Israel and each Arab delegation; the strong differences between the Palestinian and other more intransigent positions (such as the Syrian side), led to the collapse of the common Arab front. But the element that decreed the Palestinian discreet success in Madrid was the emergence of an understanding with the Americans, which overthrew Middle Eastern politics, marking a watershed in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The conference was unable to conclude any agreement between the parties concerned. but the symbolic significance was great: for the first time Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians and Syrians sat together at the same table. By early spring 1992, progresses in the peace process had evidently slowed down and the negotiations were affected by a number of external factors; Shimon Peres later wrote: «Those who determined the course of the talks did not participate in them, whereas those who participated in the talks had no say in the course of the negotiations⁶⁴⁴». At the conference venues the atmosphere was very formal, but friendly, the meetings were characterized by paralysis and inertia, and the

⁶⁴³ Shlaim A., *Il Muro di Ferro...*, op. cit., p.534.

⁶⁴⁴ Peres S., *The New Middle East*, Henry Holt, 1993, p.7-10.

Israeli delegation was distinguished by the lack of willingness in conducting the negotiations. Afterwards, the Shamir declared to the press that progress was not in his intentions and that he would not be disappointed if the negotiation would have been dragged for a decade⁶⁴⁵, even though he later claimed that his words had not been reported faithfully.

During the talks, the *Likud* government continued in the attempt to gain time and the Israeli delegation had received recommendations not to deal truly with concessions on substantive issues, but to give only the impression that a real discussion was taking place⁶⁴⁶. This attitude was designed to convince the Americans that Israel was negotiating in good faith but disagreement over some principles couldn't be resolved.

Bilateral talks triggered in Israel an intense debating on the future of the Occupied Territories and on the relations with its neighbors; opinion polls showed that the Israelis were much more affected by moderation signals coming from the other side and were available to give some territories in change of peace. It was mainly on the eastern front that the national debate was focused, either because it touched the core values of Israeli identity and because it was still the field involved with clashes of the protracted intifada.

Shamir was targeted then on two fronts: the left wing accused his political and economic priorities, facilitating the allocation of funds for the settlements in the Territories, instead of dealing with immigrant absorption and welfare issue inside the Green Line, disfiguring in this way the Zionist idea and transforming it in something unrecognizable. The rightist parties accused him of being too compliant and too fast on undertaking the path of Palestinian self-government, selling Israel's integrity under American pressure. In order to avoid the attacks both on the international and on the domestic sides, the premier adopted an ambiguous strategy, trying to convince Washington that he was doing everything to reach an agreement with the Palestinians, while simultaneously reassuring the far right that they had nothing to fear about any significant territorial concession.

Despite his efforts, in January 1992, Rehavam Ze'ev, leader of *Moledet* and Yuval Ne'eman, leader of *Tehiya*, deprived the government of its slight majority in the *Knesset*, in order to make the Middle Eastern peace process to waver: «I hope our government exits slowing down the peace process, which we consider as a deadly danger to the state of Israel⁶⁴⁷», Ne'eman declared in his letter of resignation. With *Tehiya* and *Moledet* out from the government, the Prime Minister began the countdown for new general elections; such precarious political situation did not soften Shamir's policy towards negotiations, making Washington come to the conclusion that there was no hope of getting a change of attitude from this government. The Bush administration decided then to suggest to the Israeli electorate who, if they wanted to maintain American economic support, would have to

⁶⁴⁵ *Ma'ariv* (Heb.), June 26th 1992 and Jerusalem Post, June 28th 1992.

⁶⁴⁶ Schiff Z., in *Ha'aretz*, June 19th 1991.

⁶⁴⁷ Shlaim A., *Il Muro di Ferro...*, op.cit., p. 544.

form the next government, delaying the concession of the loans of \$10 billion that Israel needed to absorb the mass immigration from former Soviet Union,

5.4 1992 Elections, a second *mahapach*

The elections of June 23rd 1992 were among the most important in Israel's history, as they focused clearly on the issue of peace and on the future of the Territories. Shamir represented the political tradition of *Likud* territorial maximalism; Yitzhak Rabin, the Labor attitude towards territorial compromise. The right camp was even more fragmented than ever; in contrast, the three parties of the peace camp (*Mapam*, *Ratz* and *Shinui*) united to form *Meretz*. *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* reformed itself⁶⁴⁸: a one-person one-vote system of over 100,000 party members elected numerous (of the so-called) doves to high positions on Labor's candidate list, moreover it produced a more youthful, dynamic and attractive proposal for the electorate⁶⁴⁹. The election campaign began with an electorate tired of the right government, especially due to Shamir's stubborn opposition to negotiations with the Arab states and his refusal to stop building settlements.

5.4.1 All about Rabin

The *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* focused its campaign⁶⁵⁰ on presenting the Rabin (the new leader of the party) as a credible Prime Minister for the nation; Rabin was "Mr. Security" in the eyes of Israeli public, the man who knew how to protect Israeli interests and could be trusted to make the right decisions on security⁶⁵¹. The public trusted his personality, his integrity, his undiplomatic propensity to speak the truth and, above all, his commitment to making a change.

The Labor Party played a dominant role thanks also to the use of very interesting slogans, such as "Israel is waiting for Rabin", which was deliberately played on the phrase "Nasser is waiting for Rabin" became famous during the Six Days War. The use of this refrain had a dual purpose: first to remind the electorate that Rabin was in charge of the IDF during its success in 1967 and to portray

⁶⁴⁸ The most important change was the ousting of Shimon Peres as party leader, that had a great impact on public opinion attracting many voters, also from the right.

⁶⁴⁹ In 1988, just a handful of Labor candidates for the *Knesset* were in the thirties and forties, but in 1992 the number was twenty-four.

⁶⁵⁰ Peres' 1988 team was changed and replaced by people from outside the party and some veteran politicians, such as Haim Ramon and Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, the campaign manager.

⁶⁵¹ See Labor Party's electoral poster, figure n.12 "We are security. Labor Party", ANNEX II - Collected selection propaganda for the *Knesset*. 1948 - Series 13 (V 2885): Elections to the Thirteenth *Knesset* - 1992, The National Library of Israel, V 3503, file n.1: *Mifletet Ha'Avoda*, p.435.

him as a father and a hero of the nation. Moreover, the party decided to change its name in order to emphasize the election of Rabin as its candidate for the premiership (instead of Peres⁶⁵²), calling it “Labor under Rabin’s leadership⁶⁵³” and underlying the campaign’s presidential approach⁶⁵⁴.

The decision to concentrate on Rabin was based on the attempt to make the elections a direct contest between Rabin and Shamir; indeed with the adoption of such positioning strategy, Rabin aimed to blur his differences with Shamir on the peace and security issue and concentrate on what he termed a “re-ordering of national priorities⁶⁵⁵”, meaning the redistribution of resources from the settlements within the Green Line and the freeze of the construction of what he called “political settlements⁶⁵⁶” in the Territories. Rabin portrayed himself as though on security but pragmatic in terms of peace negotiations, on social and economic issues he made full use of the cost of *Likud*’s priority of *Eretz Yisrael*, particularly on the new Soviet immigrants and other lower-income groups⁶⁵⁷. During the election campaign, Rabin essentially played all the traditional cards of *Likud* propaganda, but without ideology, in this way he could afford to produce general responses, while Shamir had to justify his government on specific issues. Voters were called therefore to express their preference about the destination of the limited Israeli economic resources between the integration of Soviet immigrants within the country’s borders before 1967 and the construction of the Great Israel envision⁶⁵⁸. There was an even more critical choice hidden in these alternatives: to live in a Jewish majority respectful of the rights of the Arab minority, or in a state with a large Arab population

⁶⁵² Some polls showed that between Rabin and Peres, the first one would have had more chances to win against Shamir, due to the fact that he was more popular than him. This was the main reason that brought Labor Party to choose him as its leader.

⁶⁵³ Azulay-Katz O., *Rabin, Rabin and again Rabin*, *Yediot Ahronot*, May 8th 1992.

⁶⁵⁴ See Labor Party’s electoral poster, figure n.9 “Labor headed by Rabin” and figure n. *Error! Main Document Only*. “Let’s choose the prime minister. Rabin”, ANNEX II - Collected selection propaganda for the *Knesset*. 1948 - Series 13 (V 2885): Elections to the Thirteenth *Knesset* - 1992, The National Library of Israel, V 3503, file n.1: *Mifletet Ha’Avoda*, p.434.

⁶⁵⁵ Lochery N., *Israeli Labor Party...*, op. cit., p.

⁶⁵⁶ He distinguished between security settlements and political ones; the first one was placed for military reasons in the Golan Heights and in the Valley of the Jordan River, while the second type were usually founded in the wake of the national-religious ideology.

⁶⁵⁷ This proposal for a new order of priorities can be explicitly found in in the very first page of *Ha’Avoda*’s electoral program for the elections of 1992 (p.1), provided in ANNEX I – *Mifletet Ha’Avoda*’s Political Platforms for *Knesset* Elections, 1, *Labor Party’s platform for the Thirteenth ...*, op. cit., p. 297.

⁶⁵⁸ The stress put on the possibility to a radical change of leadership is showed in Labor’s campaign poster, picturing a ballot preceded by a diagram symbolizing the critical situation of the country after years of *Likud*-led governments, saying “The decision is yours”, figure n.10, ANNEX II - Collected selection propaganda for the *Knesset...*, op. cit., p.434.

sharply opposed to Israeli domination, which would then have to be subjected to a military regime. Voters would have to choose between a democratic Jewish state or a state that could have become bi-national and anti-democratic. The elections became thus a sort of thing on the issue of peace. Moreover, Shamir's assurances to settler audience during the election campaign that he would not accept an American *diktat* to halt the settlements may have won him some votes, but undoubtedly it also hardened the stand of the Bush administration on the question of the loan guarantees. So, Baker told in May 1992 that Israel would have not received the \$10 billion because Shamir had reneged on his promise of February 1991 to restrict settlements. No doubt Baker used the loans issue to influence Shamir's electoral downfall. For the US Secretary of State Shamir's refusal in January 1992 to accept US terms, effectively destroyed the last vestiges of American confidence in the cooperation with *Likud* government; this event catalyzed a feel-bad factor in the Israeli electorate which had the still supported Shamir.

The general strategy of 1992 was to attract specific key target groups, such as the new Soviet immigrants and some 100.000 soft *Likud* voters, 60% of whom was of *Mizrachi* origins. Labor Party's strategy was based on winning an extra 3 seats from the *Likud* and fragmenting the rest of the disillusioned *Likud* voters among other smaller right-wing parties. The tactic of moving votes to the extreme right proved to be effective to the *Mifleget Ha'Avoda*, because not all the right-wing parties crossed the new electoral threshold (1,5%), in this way this shift gave to Labor camp its victory in the election, with a far higher number of wasted votes from the *Likud*-led block.

The *Likud* adopted two lines of attack against *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* and the lack of real ideological counter-arguments, demonstrated how the electoral campaign was dominated by personalities and by a leadership contest. In the first place *Likud* asserted that Rabin would be controlled by the dovish majority in the party, as Roni Milo⁶⁵⁹ stated: «Behind Rabin is Peres, behind Peres is Beilin, behind Beilin in Sarid, behind Sarid is Miari⁶⁶⁰ and behind Miari is Arafat⁶⁶¹». Of course, *Likud* objected Labor promise to suspend construction and development of new Jewish political settlements in the Occupied Territories, charging Rabin to “put *Eretz Yisrael* on sale” and to “engage in conspiracies with Arabs”⁶⁶².

⁶⁵⁹ He moved into politics with the *Herut* faction of *Likud*, and was Chairman of the party's Information Department; He also became Chairman of the World *Likud* Organization and he was the campaign manager for *Likud* in the elections of 1992.

⁶⁶⁰ Mohammed Miari headed the Progressive List for Peace (*HaReshima HaMitkademet LeShalom*), a left-wing political party in Israel, an alliance of both Arab and Jewish left-wing activists.

⁶⁶¹ Lochery N., *Israeli Labor Party...*, op. cit., p.

⁶⁶² An example of such rhetoric is well expressed in pictures n. 14 and 16, respectively saying “Today you chose which identity card will have for the country” and “The Left is a danger for the unity of Jerusalem”, see ANNEX

When it became clear that this first strategy was not successful, the *Likud* turned to personal attacks on Rabin himself⁶⁶³, based on two separate incidents: his nerve break-down on the eve of Six Days War and his failure to return home from Washington at the breakout of Intifada. Moreover, one commercial showed a lighted cigarette doused in a whisky glass, intended to fuel the flames on rumors that Rabin was an alcoholic⁶⁶⁴. The concealed message: Rabin may appear to be a tough former general but he has a flawed character likely to crack under pressure. But also, this plan boomeranged against *Likud*.

In general, *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* and Rabin decided to respond on *Likud* attacks, developing argumentations in areas in which they felt to enjoy an advantage over the adversaries, mainly pointing at its mistaken national priorities, such as how their infatuation with developing settlements had resulted in the neglect of serious economic and social problems. Labor's accusations were reinforced in April 1992 when the report of the State Comptroller was released; it charged government's officials with using public funds for personal use⁶⁶⁵, favoritism and spending millions on empty buildings in the West Bank, while there was housing shortage in Israel.

Rabin and his team avoided attacking directly the issue of Territories about retaining or returning them, instead they denounced the allocations of the limited economic resources available to the wrong targets and, because that stubborn policy, the hurdle of the relations with the United States, which meant the loss of the proposed loan guarantee of \$10 billion for absorbing the immigrants. *Likud* incompetence, corruption and disunity also stood at the center of the campaign, while on the other side *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* contrasted this reality with the fact that its ranks closed around Rabin and conducted the first democratic and open primary⁶⁶⁶ for the *Knesset* list.

II - *Collected selection propaganda for the Knesset*. 1948 - Series 13 (V 2885): Elections to the Thirteenth *Knesset* - 1992, The National Library of Israel, V 3503, file n.1: *Mifleget HaLikud*, p.436.

⁶⁶³ An example of this type of propaganda could be seen in picture n.15, in which Rabin is portrayed while drinking alcohol and a big warning on him saying "Danger", ANNEX II- *Collected selection propaganda for the Knesset*, op. cit., p. 436,

⁶⁶⁴ Tal Y. and Galili O., *David Levy: Likud's Line of Propaganda of Attacking Rabin is a Mistake*, *Ha'aretz*, June 3rd 1992

⁶⁶⁵ *Ha'Avoda's* electoral poster, figure n. 10, says "We all are cleaning the country" and makes a list of points criticizing *Likud's* mistakes, in ANNEX II - *Collected selection propaganda for the Knesset...*, op. cit., p. 434.

⁶⁶⁶ The decision taken was to open the selection process to the 160.000 party members, in order to ensure the selection of more genuinely popular candidates. As a result, 14 of 40 candidates on the Labor list were newcomers to national politics.

5.4.2 The return of *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* as a dominant party

The election results were dramatic: the *Likud* vote dropped from 40 to 32 MKs; there was a move away from the *Likud* towards Labor and *Tsomet*. On the other side, *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* and *Meretz* increased their vote and they achieved 61 seats with the help of the Arab parties; meanwhile the far right declined dramatically. *Shas* retained its vote. The heyday of *Likud* had come to an end due to the inability of those of the extreme right to think pragmatically had contributed to the heavy defeat of *Likud* and to the *mahapach* of 1992.

The turnout, although it was the second lowest since 1951, was still high at 76.8%, moreover the new electoral threshold meant that 1.5% of the total vote (39,253 votes) was needed by a party to win a seat in the *Knesset*; off the 3,616,841 votes cast some 130,989 were lost because the respective list failed to reach that percentage. Crucial to the outcome of the election was the fact that the number of votes lost by pro-*Likud* lists was twice than the pro-Labor lists and it was this element that gave the *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* coalition its 1 seat victory over the *Likud* camp. The Labor Party scored a double victory in the election⁶⁶⁷: first, it increased its number of seats from 39 to 44 and second, its block increased from 55 to 61⁶⁶⁸.

Conversely, the major loser was the *Likud* which experienced a double defeat⁶⁶⁹ both at the party and block levels with its number of seats declining from 40 to 32, with the party losing ground in all sectors of the electorate⁶⁷⁰. In addition, many of the disillusioned *Likud* voters simply didn't vote at all, contributing to the relatively amount of lost votes; moreover, among the Soviet immigrants (9% of the electorate) the right block won only 18% of the vote compared to the 47% of the Labor Party, thus making a considerable contribution to *Likud's* double defeat⁶⁷¹. The Israeli left out-performed the parties of the right: *Mifleget Ha'Avoda*, *Meretz* and Arab lists totaled 1,284,992, while *Likud*, *Tzomet* and *Moledet* won 928,380 votes. We have to take into account *Tehiya's* loss⁶⁷², which was vital for *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* as without it there would have been parity between the two blocks, allowing the *Likud* a blocking majority against the narrow-based Labor government.

The other major winner was the secular parties *Meretz* and *Tzomet*, which originated from the opposites of the political spectrum, but shared a common attitude opposing religious coercion;

⁶⁶⁷Its percentage of votes grew by 15 points.

⁶⁶⁸Arian A., *Two Reversal in Israeli Politics: why 1992 was not 1977*, Electoral Studies, vol.12, n.4, 1993, p.316.

⁶⁶⁹ The *Likud* vote decreased by 8%, from 709,305 to 651,229.

⁶⁷⁰ This loss took place also in *Sephardi* areas, with the voters either moving to the right (*Tzomet*), towards *Shas* or shifting their vote for the Labor Party.

⁶⁷¹ These numbers are taken from a poll conducted by the Israeli Broadcasting Authority on June 23rd 1992.

⁶⁷² It failed to reach the threshold and to gain a single seat in the *Knesset*. Many of its voters switched to *Tzomet*.

Tzomet rose its numbers from 2 to 8, while *Meretz* from 10 to 12. The increase of these two groups can also be seen as the rejection by segments of the Israeli society of the power and influence that the religious parties enjoyed well beyond their numerical strength during the 1980s⁶⁷³. Indeed, there was a widespread sense that the courting of the religious parties had been damaging as well as totally futile; this enabled Rabin to articulate the frustration of the secular Israeli public against the peripheral (yet electorally important) religious parties, stating that he opposed the extreme dependence on such groups. Even if Rabin was yet careful not to alienate the religious public, he was a change of wording in a controversial resolution which had already been passed by the Labor Convention: “a separation of state and religion” was rephrased as “a separation of religion from politics”.

Based on these data Labor Party won about half of its increased support from the new voters (100.000) and half of the *Likud* voters (100.000)⁶⁷⁴; among these, half went to *Miflet Ha'Avoda* and half to the extreme right, in particular *Tzomet* which benefited of the public's disappointment with *Likud*.

The 1992 elections were more than a defeat for the *Likud*; they also signaled, at least temporarily, the weakening of the block of parties on the right and the breakdown of the coalition of the right wing with religious parties. The parliamentary balance between left and right/religious parties was 61:59⁶⁷⁵ in favor of the first ones; this result enabled Labor to dominate government coalition, having a blocking majority that prevented the formation of a right-religious front, even if Rabin could form the Cabinet with difficulties.

The voters made *Ha'Avoda* return to power with the clear mandate to carry out its political program; Rabin with his though, security-minded image attracted undecided voters and move seats from *Likud* to Labor; he was seen as a man who would have transcended ideology and seek practical solutions to long-standing problems. Moreover, the main reasons of *Likud* defeat can be found in the following elements: the party's presentation to voters with a series of internal discord, corruption, and lack of leadership, the incompetence of Shamir's government in restoring the economic situation (with a high level of inflation and unemployment). The Shamir and his party had apparently had forgotten that the party came to power in 1977 on a wave of discontent at the corruption within the *Ma'arach*. *Likud*'s poor performance in addressing the absorption of migrants from the Soviet Union, the failure to contain the Intifada by reaching a political agreement, the inclination of a large number

⁶⁷³ Additionally, *Tzomet* picked up the votes of the disillusioned supporters of *Likud*, mainly in the lower-income urban areas; while *Meretz* drew support from the Kibbutz movement and first-time voters.

⁶⁷⁴ Most of them were Sephardim and *Labor*'s success was related to the ability of prying them away from *Likud*.

⁶⁷⁵ Knesset Elections Results, *Elections to the Thirteenth Knesset - 23 June, 1992*, (https://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res13.htm).

of moderate Israelis who considered was the time in order to reach a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and Shamir's sacrifice of special relationship with America on the ideological altar of Great Israel, fostered the belief among Israeli voters that the *Likud* was affected by power *malaise*, that it had been in office for too long and it was time for change.

5.4.3 The impact of demography

In 1992, the electorate was 48% *Ashkenazim*, 44% *Sephardim* and 8% Israeli born⁶⁷⁶. Despite *Ashkenazim* continued to dominate the reality of Israel in the 1990s (thanks also to the mass immigration from the former Soviet Union), the proportion of *Mizrachim* had grown in the electorate and it was clear that Labor would have to fight in order to increase its share of the Oriental vote and regain power. That shift occurred in 1992 when, even if the trend was not overwhelming, the movement of Sephardim to *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* (26%) was substantial enough to provide the boost necessary to win elections⁶⁷⁷. It worked because it occurred in conjunction with the impetus received by the votes of Soviet immigrants and the movement of former supporters of *Likud* towards parties of the extreme right⁶⁷⁸.

The electoral bounce that Labor Party received from Sephardim voters was due also to a scandal, involving the ethnic theme, occurred in the *Likud* party during the electoral campaign. Shamir relationship with David Levy⁶⁷⁹, the Foreign Minister, was already plummeted some months before, when Levy refused to attend the Madrid conference because Shamir suddenly decided to head the delegation himself; a dovish Levy could not trust the hard-liner Prime Minister in such an unprecedented international gathering. In the wake of the elections, the *Mizrachi* politician found himself marginalized when he discovered that he had been ranked only 18th in the candidate stakes by the *Likud* Central Committee. Feeling that his way to the top of the party was blocked, he started

⁶⁷⁶Central Bureau of Statistic, *Statistical Abstract of Israel - 1992*, n.43, 1992, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁷⁷When we examine the socio-demographic profile of the group of *Likud*'s voters that chose *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* or extreme right in 1992, we would observe that in that year the shift was less along ethnic lines and more along issues. Among the voters who switched from *Likud* to Labor, the 80% were influenced by the fact that Rabin was ahead of the Labor Party list.

⁶⁷⁸ The *Likud* share among this group fell from 53% to 41%.

⁶⁷⁹ He is an Israeli politician, born in Morocco, who became an important representative of *Mizrachi* Jews in Israeli politics, in particular in the *Likud*. He served as a member of the *Knesset* between 1969 and 2006, as well as deputy prime minister, minister of foreign affairs, minister of immigrant absorption, minister of housing and construction.

complaining of ethnic discrimination⁶⁸⁰, pointing out that while *Sephardi* Jews comprised the majority of the electorate, they constituted only a minority in the Central Party Committee, MKs and Cabinet ministers. The threat of resignation and the desertion to Labor, soon forced Shamir to promise that Levy would retain anyway the Foreign Ministry⁶⁸¹, but this event damaged the electoral image of *Likud* as a home for *Mizrachim*.

Another sector of Israeli society that secured Labor's victory was the group of about 350.000 new Soviet immigrants arrived in Israel during the two years before the elections. Since Israeli law permits adult immigrants arriving three months before the election day to vote, these immigrants constituted 9% of eligible voters in 1992⁶⁸². Most of them were undecided, apparently making up their minds only during the election campaign, hoping to benefit from the economic growth promised by *Ha'Avoda*. The newcomers voted 3 of 1 in favor of *Mifletet Ha'Avoda*, making a disproportionate contribution to Labor come-back⁶⁸³. The new arrivals were dissuaded not by the *Likud*'s uncompromising ideology of Greater Israel, but by its religious allies, whose values and proposals didn't have any appeal for these immigrants who were strong secularists.

Lastly, also the vote of Israeli Arab citizens (11% of the electorate in that year⁶⁸⁴) was fundamental in order to boost Rabin's victory; for the first time, this social group helped to decide a changeover of the government. Indeed, without the 5 seats of *Hadash* and the Arab Democratic Party, the Labor camp would not have obtained the minimum 61 votes required to block *Likud*. In the final analysis Arabs played, willingly or inadvertently, a crucial role in Labor's ascendance to power.

5.4.4 The role played by political issues

The main sources of this electoral change were socio-demographic factors and political issues. In both critical elections of 1977 and 1992, when a political reversal took place, the role played by these two elements was fundamental, but the degree of their impact was very different⁶⁸⁵ in defining voters' inclination towards *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* or *Likud*. Political homogeneity of groups in the

⁶⁸⁰ Indeed, this set-back couldn't be addressed to a loss of popularity, due to the fact that Levy had secured 31% to Shamir's 46% in the leadership contest against Sharon and Arens.

⁶⁸¹ Shindler C., *The Land Beyond Promise...*, op. cit., p. 276.

⁶⁸² The Israeli Democracy Institute, *Elections for the 13th Knesset- 23.6.1992*, (<https://en.idi.org.il/israeli-elections-and-parties/elections/1992/>).

⁶⁸³ Reich B., Dropkin N. and Wurmser M., *Soviet Jewish Immigration...*, op. cit.

⁶⁸⁴ Smootha S. and Peretz D., *Israel's 1992 Knesset Elections: Are They Critical?*, Middle East Journal, vol.47, n.3, Summer 1993, p.461.

⁶⁸⁵ In their work (*Two Reversals in Israeli Politics...*, op. cit.), Asher Arian and Michal Shamir calculated for each year the respective role of different electoral variables, through multiple regression.

Israeli population has increased from the 1970s through 1984 in terms of ethnicity, social class indicators and religiosity, in addition an important trend had been also the growing electoral importance of the territories issue over time. Extending this type of analysis to the 1992 elections, enable us to understand that the role of demographic factors has continued to recede since 1984 while the role of issues has increased further.

It appeared also that the issue regarding the dichotomy God/Nationalism has become more powerful over the years; coherently, also the debate about the relationship between religion and state had a trend of increasing correlation over time. The identification of *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* as a territory-peace, anti-clerical party has strengthened while its platform became less vague. In 1992 many more voters said that Territories would be an important consideration in their voting decision: 81%⁶⁸⁶ said that this issue would influence them greatly or very greatly (by contrast class cleavage, defined by income variable, is not the best measure of class in Israel).

Besides the Territories (that had had the strongest importance), also religiosity gained in relevance over time, reaching the highest point in 1992 elections while, ethnicity, after having reached its highest peak in 1984 elections, has receded ever since.

At the very end, issues are dominant in order to explain 1992 vote to a much greater degree than socio-demographic characteristics of the voters; moreover, the Territories had the strongest impact (0.46)⁶⁸⁷. While, in 1977 the evidence was quite the opposite, showing demography carrying the weight and determining the ascent of *Likud* in Israeli politics by many the ethnic cleavage⁶⁸⁸.

While also economy played an important role, socio-economic questions are not as central and critical as the major topic dimension of Israeli politics, the Territories and the Arab-Israeli conflict; this type of topic indeed may generate high degrees of group loyalty, reinforcing existing cleavages by providing new reasons for the members to support the same parties. Here we can see a mutual reinforcement process between the issues and the voting groups, which are defined, becoming politically and socially cohesive; thus, the extent to which vote is related to socio-demographic characteristics of voters depends also on the nature of the issues in the agenda.

The 1992 turnout was seen by many commentators as a referendum over the future of the Territories and its result as a rebuttal of the “no-one-inch” position of Greater Israel ideology; but party strategists preferred not to stress position-issues⁶⁸⁹, so as not to alienate big segments of the electorate. For this reason, a wedge-issue⁶⁹⁰ campaign was chosen, mainly relating on priorities; this

⁶⁸⁶ Arian A. and Shamir M., *Two Reversals...*, *op. cit.*, p.321.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸⁸ Ethnicity has been a very important theme in the first two generations of Israelis.

⁶⁸⁹ They are divisive political issues for which there are different (even opposite) preferences among voters.

⁶⁹⁰ They are topics which are able to split the opposition camp and make some former supporters of the other side amenable to appeals to change their vote.

meant that *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* tried to lure the voters on the basis of a different set of priorities. This tactic was realized by denouncing *Likud* settlements policy on the basis of allocating too much of Israel's limited resources to the wrong target, rather than attacking the merits of retaining Territories. So, Rabin promised to invest in infrastructures, education and welfare within Israel; this line of argument could appeal not only *Likud* voters with more conciliatory attitudes towards the Territories, but also to hardliner voters who were not willing to give up Gaza and the West Bank, but who felt a deep concern about socio-economic issues. In 1992, the management of the debate over settlements and the scandals of *Likud*'s corruption were the perfect examples of a campaign's strategy based on wedge issues, adopted to break adversaries' common front. The fact that the main issue of the campaign still remained the peace process was due to the temporal proximity of those elections to important events of the Arab-Israeli conflict: the round of voting was held eighteen months after the Gulf War, nine months after the negotiations in Madrid started and four and a half year into Intifada, so the dilemma of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Territories became the major focus for the electoral change⁶⁹¹.

The longstanding Palestinian uprising made Israelis feel unsafe, damaged in the economy and deepened internal political rifts; the lesson that was drawn by many of them was that the Palestinian question could not be settled by force according *Likud*'s prescription, but only through political negotiation. So, besides the massive disaffection with *Likud*, Shamir's party fell victim of the evolving peace process. In these terms the intifada had a cumulative effect registered among the Israeli public only at a later time; this was the same delayed response that affected Labor in 1977, as a consequence of the 1973 war.

5.4.5 Interpreting the 1992 elections

In 1992 the central-left bloc (*Mifleget Ha'Avoda*, *Meretz* the Arab Democratic Party and *Hadash*) received the support of 1.283.338 voters, obtaining a majority of 61 seats; while the Greater Israel-bloc, including *Likud*, *Tzomet*, *Moledet* and *Mafdal*, received only 1.074.658 votes. This electoral shift symbolized the birth of the Third Israeli Republic⁶⁹². Fifteen years earlier, on May 1977, Israeli voters produced the first electoral earthquake leading to the fall of the First Israeli Republic which had been ruled since 1948 by the *Mapai*; the Second Israeli Republic born in that year brought forward the national-religious alliance, with its adherence to the *Eretz Yisrael* ideology⁶⁹³. Despite some parallels existing between the scenarios that led to the fall of the first and second republics (such as

⁶⁹¹ Shaked R., *A Poll: the Majority Are for the Allon Plan* (Heb.), *Yediot Aharonot*, June 7th 1991.

⁶⁹² Allon G., *The Final Results of the Elections for the Thirteenth Knesset*, *Ha'aretz*, June 26th 1992.

⁶⁹³ This periodization of Israeli political history is explained by Hadar L.T. in his article *The 1992 Electoral Earthquake and the fall of the "Second Israeli Republic"*, *Middle East Journal*, vol.46, n.4, Autumn 1992.

the loss of charismatic leaders in the leading party, an important failure in national security and widespread corruption among the political elite), some observers argued that the shift which took place in 1992 was merely superficial and that it did not involve a more profound change in Israeli political culture, as happened in 1977. One very supported interpretation is that 1992 turnout was mainly a popularity match between Rabin and Shamir, with an election campaigns devoid of serious ideological and political debate, dominated by superficial advertising; and with the voters, dissatisfied with *Likud* government's performance, as well as with its lack of unity and high corruption, casting a vote of protest which basically did not reject the message of the party. Along with this version, the Israelis did not change their political and ideological orientation, rather they were not convinced by the medium of transmission represented by Shamir and this element brought many of them to vote instead for Rabin, the candidate of the left parties. This interpretation is very important in order to understand better the type of mandate that *Miflet Ha'Avoda* received and, by consequence, to the chances of pursuing successfully the Arab-Israeli peace process; if the Israeli public rejected *Likud's* vision, so the Rabin government had effectively a mandate to change the posture the Jewish state has been maintaining in the last fifteen years.

Any analysis that explains the 1992 elections only in terms of a contest between the two leaders is not enough in order to understand the dynamics that brought to this change; the "Second Republic", like the first one, fell also as a result of the interaction between the domestic system and the international environment: in both cases the collapse of the political establishments, based on a set of values, was a product of three domestic mechanisms⁶⁹⁴ (*Sephardi* demographics, political orientation of the religious-orthodox bloc and the inclination of the national consensus on national security) and three international developments (the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict during the 1980's, the end of the Cold War and the US-Israeli relationship). Reading this factors all together, it is possible to deduce that Israeli voters not only rejected the *Likud* for its leadership, but also for the historical visions and attitudes it promulgated: somehow, Shamir's agenda ceased to respond to the realities Israel was facing, so the electorate chose for the more pragmatic and moderate *Miflet Ha'Avoda*, that they believed to be able to deal with the problem of the state: «Instead of the "three no's" that dominated the old national consensus during the years of the Second Republic, the new national consensus, which reflected the mood of the Israeli voters in 1992, was characterized by "three yes's": yes to negotiations with the Arabs, yes to the land-for-peace formula and yes to a stronger relationship with the United States⁶⁹⁵».

The break out of the Intifada, the end of the Cold War, the Madrid Conference and the change of the American-Israeli relations shattered the status-quo in Israel and helped transform the three

⁶⁹⁴ For further detailed studies see Reich B. and Kieval G. R., *Israeli Politics in the 1990's: Key Domestic and Foreign Policy Factors*, Greenwood Press, 1991.

⁶⁹⁵ Hadar L.T., *The 1992 Electoral Earthquake...*, op. cit., p. 599.

pillars of *Likud* power: *Sephardi* support, the pro-Greater Israel nationalist-religious alliance and a hawkish national consensus. The need for bold, swift steps towards peace replaced these elements and formed the core of Rabin's message to Israel; his government maintained that for Israel's own sake it should withdraw from most of the Territories and dissociate itself from any involvement with the Palestinian populations, if Israel wanted to remain a Jewish and democratic state.

Even if *Miflet Ha'Avoda* scored a victory, defined by many as "technical result"⁶⁹⁶, Labor's ascendance to power was a response to deep concerns and Rabin went to power, thus, mainly as an outcome of a struggle between two visions of the Jewish State and, in 1992 won the secular, socialist and progressive camp of Zionism, that Rabin's government represented, being the most moderate in Israeli history.

The 1992 elections are critical because *Ha'Avoda* was able (thanks to the convincing and charismatic leadership of Rabin) to break the ideological monopoly of *Likud*, reshaping Israeli political culture, demonstrating to be another *mahapach* in public minds⁶⁹⁷. Even if *Miflet Ha'Avoda* wouldn't be able to maintain numerically political dominance in the following elections, since these elections, the country embarked a new course with electoral turnouts that we will see to be characterized by a stronger relevance of peace and territorial issues (as the most important variable orienting voters' decision), a higher turnover between the two major parties, a greater importance given to leadership and more decisive role for collective identity as the major resource for political mobilization, inseparable part of Israeli political struggle.

5.5. *Ha'Avoda's* approach: land for peace

On June 23rd 1992, when Labor camp returned to power with 44 seats for *Miflet Ha'Avoda* and 12 for *Meretz*; Rabin formed the government with *Shas*⁶⁹⁸ (acronym of *Shomrei Torah Sephardim*, Torah's Sephardic Guardians), which abandoned within few months the ruling coalition, forcing

⁶⁹⁶ The recurrent argument is that the hawkish vote was greater than the dovish one among the Jewish voters. It is argued that the vote for *Likud* and the religious-nationalist bloc (*Likud*, *Tzomet*, *Moledet*, *Tehiya*, New Liberals, *Geulat Yisrael*, Torah and Land, *Shas*, *Mafdal* and *Yahadut HaTorah HaMeuhedet*), for a total of 1.290.226, out-numbered the votes for Labor and *Meretz* (1.157.447). It is further supported that a stalemate between the two blocks is apparent, even the votes cast by Arabs for *Hadash*, the ADP and the PLP are added to Labor and *Meretz* (1.284.962).

⁶⁹⁷ Arian A. and Shamir M., *Elections in Israel 1992*, SUNY Press, 1994, p. 9.

⁶⁹⁸ The acronym also refers to *Shisha Sedarim*, the six orders of the *Mishnà*. Founded in 1984 under the eagerness of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, *Sephardi* chief rabbi of Israel, along with the non-*Chassidi Haredim* (orthodox) Jews of Ashkenazi origin. The political positions of this party were flexible and flexible on all subjects that did not relate to religious areas.

the Prime Minister to rely on *Hadash* external support⁶⁹⁹ and the alliance with *HaMiflaga HaDemokratit Ha'Aravit*⁷⁰⁰ (Arab Democratic Party, *al-Hizb al-Dimuqrati al-Arabi*).

The composition of the government meant a clear cut with the previous administration; if Shamir's government was the most aggressive in Israel's history, Rabin's one was the most moderate, in fact his main partner was the leftist *Meretz*. Although the prime minister had only a narrow majority of 62 to 120 MKs, he could still count on the support of Arab and Communist parties to handle a moderate foreign policy more inclined towards dialogue. The electoral results had given the premier the mandate to make a change in Israeli approach towards the peace process: «We inherited the structure of the Madrid conference from the previous government, but there is a significant change: the previous government has created the means, but has never intended to use them to achieve peace⁷⁰¹», he told to the *Knesset*.

The Prime Minister exercised a very strong authority, due to his personality and his military career, which aroused profound confidence in the Israeli public. His direct involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, first as a soldier and then as a diplomat and politician, played a key role in shaping his approach. His perception of the world was shaped by the suspicion towards Arab neighbors and by a deep sense of responsibility for Israeli security; even if these crucial points remained, he started to change his approach after the intifada, believing that diplomacy should be supported by military force and that regarding the Palestinian question, the solution was political and not military. Thanks to his pragmatism, he could recognize that the “iron wall” of Jewish military power had achieved its purpose and it was time to negotiate the end of the conflict⁷⁰².

If Rabin was the security expert, his Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, was the skilled statesman; he had much more empathy with the Arab populations and he had come to a clearer assessment of the situation, articulating it in the vision of a new Middle East⁷⁰³. Security from his point of view was not only related to the military realm but also to an economic and psychological dimension, so he firmly believed in the economic element of peace-building as he firmly believed in the peace process.

⁶⁹⁹ Rabin was very concerned about the composition of its government, indeed, due to the foreign policy actions that he was about to take, he knew very well that he would have needed a solid Jewish majority. For this reason, he preferred not to include *Hadash* and *Miflaga HaDemokratit Ha'Aravit* in the coalition government, rather to form an external alliance.

⁷⁰⁰ Founded in 1988 by Abdel Wahab Daroushe, a former member of the Labor Office, is based on a platform to ensure total equality with Israeli Arabs and full withdrawal from the Territories with the establishment of a Palestinian state.

⁷⁰¹ *Ha'aretz*, September 11th 1992.

⁷⁰² Aronoff Y. S., *The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers: When Hard-Liners Opt for Peace* Paperback, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

⁷⁰³ His vision, developed in *The New Middle East* (Shaftesbury, 1993), inspired the European Union model, giving great emphasis to integration and economic cooperation.

When he became part of the government, he immediately clarified that he would have put aside old rivalry with Rabin and took part of the Cabinet only for the sake of the peace process, but if the talks would have derailed, he would not hesitate to rebel against government's decisions⁷⁰⁴.

On July 13th Rabin presented the *Knesset* its program, divided into three points: national priorities, peace process and Israel's role in the world; the premier explained that instead of squandering resources in the Territories, his government would employ those funds to integrate new immigrants and implement economic and social reforms. As far as peace was concerned, he announced that priority would be given to talks on Palestinian autonomy⁷⁰⁵ but that, however, peace could not be at the expense of national security: «With regard to Israel's security, we will not grant anything. From our point of view, security has precedence over peace⁷⁰⁶».

But the most striking part of his speech was the role of Israel in the world; Jewish history was traditionally represented as an infinite chain of tribulations, at the apex with gas chambers. Many *Likud* leaders had adopted this rhetoric, cultivating the image of a Jewish state alone and vulnerable, providing as a solution to the establishment of *Eretz Yisrael*. Rabin openly contended that the whole world was against Israel: «We must overcome the sense of isolation we have been succumbed for almost half century⁷⁰⁷». Rabin set his objectives changing Israel's national agenda and kick-starting the peace process.

The question of the Territories was lived by the electorate not only as the problem of relations with the Palestinians and the Arab neighbors but, in a wider sense, also as the question of the “normalization” of the state of Israel in a region that remained basically hostile. The acknowledgement that Israel could not fully and permanently occupy the Territories and that the dialogue with PLO was inevitable and this awareness was going to meet a favorable momentum, corresponding to the global dominance of the United States that had the necessary influence to foster long-lasting arrangements between the Jewish state and its neighbors⁷⁰⁸ But, above all, the problem was (and it has always been) the legitimization of the enemy and for Israelis it was very difficult to offer it to an organization, whose ultimate goal in the past was the destruction of the

⁷⁰⁴ Peres S., *Battling for Peace...*, op. cit., p.320-321.

⁷⁰⁵ Although not convinced that peace was within the reach, he was prepared to examine the possibilities and two avenues of actions were open: negotiations with President Assad of Syria or with Palestinians. A peace treaty with Damascus had solid strategic advantages, but reaching an agreement with the latter would address the painful core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, changing the relations between Israel and the Arab world.

⁷⁰⁶ Shalim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p. 555.

⁷⁰⁷ *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Address to the Knesset by Prime Minister Rabin Presenting his Government - 13 July 1992, Israel's Foreign Relations - Selected Documents, vol. 13-14: 1992-1994, n.l.*

⁷⁰⁸ Makovsky D., *Making Peace with the PLO: the Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accords*, Westview Press, 1996, p.III.

Jewish state born in 1947. So, Rabin had to proceed cautiously along this path, also because he had to face the increasingly intense opposition of the right and of the settlers. In the early 1990s, the future of the Territories had become the most relevant political issue in Israel.

5.5.1 Rabin, the *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* and the Oslo Process

Early in December 1992 Yair Hirschfeld, a professor of Middle Eastern history at Haifa University, met in a London hotel with Ahmed Suleiman Karia, the head of the PLO Finance Department, better known as Abu Alaa. The meeting was proposed by Hanan Ashrawi, then the spokeswoman of the Palestinian delegation to the Washington talks, and mediated by Terje Rod Larsen, a Norwegian scholar whom Hirschfeld had met the previous year. Hirschfeld and Abu Alaa agreed on trying to formulate a declaration of principles that would be acceptable to both sides.

Hirschfeld had been a member of *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* for many years and he was active in its different “dovish” circles; it was in these circles that he met Yossi Beilin, a confidant of Peres. Immediately after his meeting with Abu Alaa, Hirschfeld called Beilin, who encouraged him to continue with this new channel, but Beilin couldn't give him the authority to speak on behalf of the Israeli government. The decision to engage in direct secret negotiations with the PLO was a diplomatic revolution in foreign policy and paved the way for the Oslo agreement in September 1993. Three men were chiefly responsible for these decisions: Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin. The latter, then Deputy Foreign Minister, was categorical in his view according to which speaking with Arafat and his men was a necessary condition for reaching an agreement with the Palestinians. He had always belonged to the dovish wing of the Labor Party and he was the true architect of Israel's recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Beilin understood immediately that in order to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians, Israel would have to pay a very high price: first of all, the return to the pre-1967 borders, then an independent Palestinian state, together with the dismantling of Jewish settlements and finally the granting of Palestinian formal control over East Jerusalem⁷⁰⁹.

Towards the end of January 1993, Beilin actively encouraged secret meetings in Oslo: over a period of eight months, fourteen sessions of negotiations took place, all in utmost secrecy. Far from public attention and political pressures, they worked tirelessly and by the end of April 1993 the Oslo group produced a joint statement of principles and this was possible thanks to a change within the PLO; now its members were ready to discuss temporary agreements without prior agreement on the final result. Peres reported regularly the PM about developments in the informal “Norwegian channel” and, at first, Rabin showed little interest but he did not even raise objections to this attempt;

⁷⁰⁹ Tal A., *There is no Return from the Temporary*, *Ha'aretz*, September 19th 1993.

gradually, however, he showed more and more interest in the details and took an active role in directing the negotiations alongside Peres.

Four assessments (which between May and July) were crucial to catch Rabin's full involvement in the Palestinian track: the first one was the opinion of Itamar Rabinovich, head of the Israeli delegation in the negotiations with the Syria, according to whom an agreement with Damascus was attainable, but only at the expense of a complete retreat of the Golan Heights; secondly, the IDF director's report about the precarious situation of Arafat and his possible imminent collapse, making him the most convenient interlocutor of Israel at that time (since it was not possible to predict what kind of leader would have succeeded him); the third element was the impressive progress achieved through the Oslo channel and, the last one, the announcement that an alarming rise in the popular popularity of *Hamas* and *Islamic Jihad* in the Occupied Territories underlined the urgency of finding a political solution to the crisis between Israel and residents of the West Bank and Gaza⁷¹⁰.

In April 1993, the issue of National Insurance began to be debated in the party and showed its potential for conflict; indeed, Health Minister Haim Ramon, one of Labor younger and more charismatic leaders, firmly backed the bill and he threatened to resign if the party did not push the bill through the legislative process. After one month, the first significant coalition crisis erupted, the focal point was between *Meretz* and *Shas*, consisting of declarations by the Education Minister Shulamit Aloni that offended the religious members of the government. The tensions ended in June with a cabinet reshuffle, in which Aloni was replaced by another member of her party, but the government still remained with its slim majority and dealing with secular-religious tensions. Moreover, in September of the same year the coalition began to unravel, due to the fact that the two *Shas* representatives Arye Deri and (Interior Minister) and Rafael Pinhas (Deputy Minister of Religion) both faced criminal prosecution and Israel Supreme Court ruled that they could not remain in office while their criminal cases were pending. This legal decision forced *Shas* to depart from the coalition and the establishment of Israel's longest-lasting minority government.

Even if, *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* accepted easily the dramatic policy change towards the Palestinians, the Israeli public had to be convinced and, just after Oslo agreement it was adopted the government adopted the "peace is my security" and, in the last months of 1993, the battle for the hearts and minds of the Israeli citizens focused not only on the legitimacy of the peace process, but also of the government itself. Indeed, due to the composition of Rabin government, the opposition was pointing out the allegation that the Prime Minister had not been elected on a platform that allow them to take such a step, with all the dangers that the Oslo process brought with it. Israel society divided into two antagonistic equalized camps, with the national-religious camp manipulating successfully some aspect of the Oslo agreement for public relations purposes and creating some frictions (also inside the Labor Party itself).

⁷¹⁰ Marcus Y., *Ha'aretz*, September 15th 1993.

Rabin scrupulously examined every word of the joint declaration of principles elaborated in Oslo, despite his caution, he made a long way in a short time: in June he had not even taken seriously the Oslo channel and on August 23rd he publicly stated that there was no other way besides the negotiation and the recognition of PLO. The day after, on August 24 Peres and Abu Alaa signed the Declaration of Principles, then the Oslo Agreement was subsequently submitted to the Israeli Cabinet on August 30: intelligence and IDF officers also attended the meeting and, almost all ministers expressed, Secret Service and Defense Officers expressed positive opinions and approved the document unanimously with only two abstentions.

On September 9th and 10th, two letters of recognition followed⁷¹¹ and on September 13th, in Washington, Arafat and Rabin signed the Declaration of Principles⁷¹² (DOP). «When Rabin shook Arafat's hand I thought for a minute that the ceiling in the room would blow up in the air of joy. Somebody opened a bottle of champagne and disused the sweating heads of those assembled with the sparkling liquid. [...] Many cried when they sang “we will not overcome”⁷¹³». The Declaration of Principles on Transitional Self-Government Agreements, rather than a definitive agreement, was essentially a negotiating agenda marked by a rigorous roadmap, which would have led an agreement on Israeli military withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho.

The form of the definitive agreement was not specified and it is not difficult to understand the reasons for this silence: there were issues (such as the future of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, the status of Jerusalem, the borders of the Palestinian entities) on which there would be no agreement. Both sides ran a calculated risk by realizing that a large-scale deal would have come as a result if the Palestinian self-government experiment would have actually worked. The underlying idea of the aforementioned strategy was that small steps would have lead inevitably to larger ones, particularly since the two sides in negotiations get into the habit of talking and compromising. This would have made easier for the negotiators to reach successive interim agreements and to sell the compromises reached along the way to their governments and publics⁷¹⁴.

The Oslo Agreement (Oslo I) was composed of two parts, the first consisted in the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, which took shape in two letters dated September 9 but

⁷¹¹ In the letter Arafat acknowledged Israel's right to live in peace and security, it also accepted resolutions 242 and 338, declaring itself in favor of a peaceful resolution of the conflict and against the use of terrorism. For her part, Rabin recognized the PLO as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

⁷¹² Which had to be set up by the birth of a temporary self-government authority in Gaza and the West Bank. After five years, a definitive settlement of the Territories would result, through further agreements. The passage of powers was to take place gradually, in conjunction with the Israeli withdrawal; the most difficult issues such as Jerusalem, borders and settlements were postponed to another time.

⁷¹³ Sarna I., *Their November 29th*, *Hadashot*, September 14th 1993.

⁷¹⁴ Gelvin J. L., *The Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One Hundred Years of Conflict*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 234.

signed by Arafat and Rabin respectively on September 9 and 10 almost all advertising went to sign the statement of the principles but without the prior agreement on mutual recognition there would be no significant agreement on the self-governing Palestinian government. Arafat affirmed the commitment of the PLO to recognize the right of Israel to live in peace and security, to accept UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, to renounce to terrorism and other acts of violence and to modify those parts of the Palestinian National Chart that were incompatible with the commitments undertaken with Oslo I. In his concise answer, Rabin confirmed that in the light of such promises, the government of Israel decided to recognize PLO as a representative of the Palestinian people and to start negotiating with it within the Middle East peace process⁷¹⁵. The Oslo turning-point was achieved by separating the transitional agreement from the definitive one.

The document was composed by two parts: the first one was constituted by the DOP itself, along the letters of mutual recognition; instead the second one was an accord that established the withdrawal of Israeli forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and affirmed a Palestinian right of self-government within those areas through the creation of a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority. Palestinian rule was to last for a five-year interim period during which “permanent status negotiations” would commence in order to reach a final agreement. The real paradox was that Rabin needed a strong PLO in order to implement the agreement, but a strong Palestinian leadership could only strengthen its position fighting for a Palestinian independent state, a hypothesis that the Israeli PM was not inclined to give by courtesy. On the contrary, for Rabin the core of Oslo I was the demonstration by the PNA to be able to identify and pursue terrorists and to ensure Israeli security. This was the condition that would have measured the feasibility of further negotiating steps⁷¹⁶. According with the agreement, a controlled withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho was supposed to be completed within four months, moreover, within nine months, Palestinians would have elected a National Council in order to take office and assume some government responsibilities (except for defense and foreign affairs). Israel and Palestinians agreed to start negotiations for statehood within two years and, after five years, the definitive agreement would have entered into force⁷¹⁷.

Israel's change of attitude towards Palestinians was as remarkable as the Palestinian one towards Israel; indeed, Zionist politics has always been based on the assertion that it would have been easier

⁷¹⁵ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Israel-PLO Mutual Recognition- Letters and Speeches- 10 September 1993*, Israel's Foreign Relations - Historical Documents, vol. 13-14: 1992-1994, file n.107.

⁷¹⁶ After the introduction of a Palestinian police force; at the same time Israel would have transferred some powers to Palestinian Authority in five areas: health, education, social services, direct taxation and tourism.

⁷¹⁷ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, Texts and Speeches*, the White House, Washington, 13 September 1993, Israel's Foreign Relations - Historical Documents, Vol 13-14: 1992-1994, file n.108.

to reach an agreement on the division of Palestine with the leaders of the other Arab states, rather than with the Palestinian leadership. The tacit hope was that recognition by the Arab neighbors would have helped to alleviate the burden of the conflict, without granting Palestinians the right to national self-determination. Now that strategy was overturned.

The minority of Palestinians, led by *Hamas*, Islamic *Jihad* and the Palestine Liberation Front opposed to the agreement and immediately organized a violent campaign to derail the peace process. Those terrorist acts strengthened Israel's right-wing opposition to the agreement, depriving Rabin of the necessary space for diplomatic maneuvers; in the same way, in front of a once uncompromising Jewish state, Arafat, would not have had the strength to advance peace, due to the fact that also the Palestinian leader was dealing with internal struggle and difficulties to keep terrorism under control: «No systematic strategy was ever put into practice by the Palestinian Authority to block terrorist activity⁷¹⁸» which continued through the slander of attacks that were carried out in the background of the diplomatic activity of those years⁷¹⁹. Meanwhile there was a series of meetings like in Oslo, Cairo and Taba all meant to break the stalemate on the withdrawal of the IDF from Gaza e Jericho; the DOP that this will take place by April 1994, notwithstanding those initiatives, violence began to take its toll on the fragile process⁷²⁰. On February 25, 1994, inside the Ibrahimi Mosque, inside the Tomb of the Patriarchs (or *Me'arat ha-Makhpela*) holy place for Muslims and Jews, Baruch Goldstein a militant Jewish settler belonging to *Kach* (anti-Arab ultra-Orthodox movement) killed dozens of devotees gathered for the prayer; the massacre blocked the negotiations between Israel and PLO, fueling the tensions throughout the Occupied Territories. Rabin uttered words of deep contempt for the Jewish extremists and he expressed himself all defending the secular and democratic state of Israel: «You are a shame for Zionism. You have no right to be part of our people and not even of a democratic society⁷²¹». Only after the condemnation by the UN (Resolution 904), the ban of *Kach* and of the *Kahane Hai* by the Labor government and the agreement between Israel and PLO on the deployment of a Temporary International Presence in Hebron(Tiph⁷²²), negotiations were resumed.

⁷¹⁸ Marzano A., *Israele e Palestina...*, op.cit., p.120.

⁷¹⁹ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p.772.

⁷²⁰ 1994 began with the prominence of domestic politics, more specifically with the protracted issue of the National Health Insurance bringing about Ramon's resignation Idan created a new party to run in the election of the *Histadrut*. This division represented a major challenge for the *Labor* Party and its internal cohesion.

⁷²¹ Reported in Levi A., *Yitzhak Rabin, 1210 giorni per la pace*, Mondadori, 1996, p.115.

⁷²² TIPH in its present form is the result of the Hebron Protocol which calls for Denmark, Norway, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey to provide observers for the mission in Hebron, with Norway as the coordinator.

Arafat's arrival in Gaza on July 1, 1994 was taken by *Likud*'s leaders as an opportunity for a powerful demonstration of strength by organizing a rally in Zion Square in Jerusalem, when *Moledet*, *Tzomet* and other 10.000 members of the national-religious right showed their fury against government's policies, touching high level; but the wave of violence showed by the opponents to the peace process wasn't able to gain public sympathy and to incite the majority of the Israelis against Rabin and Peres. far from raising the nation against government policy. At the same time, as Arafat was losing his popular support, it was more difficult for him to make further concessions to the Israelis, and in turn, it was much more complicated for Rabin, under the crossfire of terrorism and of the extreme right, to advance with the peace process and concede to the PNA other territories and other competences. Yet, the Prime Minister realized that only giving more to the Palestinians, the number of terror attacks could be reduced by elimination of the swamp in which terrorists thrived.

The peace process moves ahead again in the mid-1994 and on July, Rabin flew again to Washington for another ground-breaking ceremony, this time with King Hussein of Jordan in order to sign a peace treaty between the two countries. Notwithstanding this great achievement, by the end of 1994 the political situation of the government became problematic because *Shas* was still outside the coalition and MK Ramon and his allies had left Labor ranks, determining government instability. Some gains in polls during early October, due to the treaty with Jordan, did little to help the government, especially since terrorism kept on striking; extremist violence had become a serious problem and public support both for the peace process and *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* again declined.

Labor Party had more trouble on the domestic front; the party's main power basis from *Histadrut* and the *kibbutz* movement had been broken or weakened, moreover the opposition, whereas constrained by internal rivalries, united behind Benjamin Netanyahu who, at that time, led Rabin in the polls. The Labor ministers began to fear electoral defeat and longer solidly backed the government, its policies or its leader. By December 1994, the prime minister appeared to be stretched on the limit, he openly attacked anyone who criticize his policies; the domestic environment was so tense that on the eve of Rabin's trip to Oslo to accept the Nobel Prize, one of the MKs called out: «Rabin the house is burning. Stay home and help put out the fire [...] We are committing political suicide⁷²³»: Fractiousness continued in 1995 as did the impasse in the peace process; Israeli fears about Palestinian inability to maintain security were confirmed when on January 22nd 1995 at the Beit Lid junction in Netanya, two bombs exploded causing a serious toll of twenty-one dead. The symbolism of the attack was very significant because the attack took place on the day of the *Shoah* commemoration and it was carried out in front of the prison where hundreds of Palestinians were detained. Following the massacre, Israeli President Ezer Weizmann, considered a dove, also called for the suspension of peace talks with. The anti-government protests that followed became massive

⁷²³ Hazan R. Y., *The Labor Party and the peace process: partisan disintegration amid political cohesion*, The Leonard Davis Institute, Jerusalem, 1998, p.10.

and hostile, while polls showed that support for Rabin and the party was considerably declining. After each attack the public took the streets, the PM was personally assaulted; many observers indicated that he had withdrawn you from the peace process and that Peres was now the only one trying to impel it. A vicious circle had developed: the lack of progress in the peace process caused internal problems in the Labor Party which, in turn, generated further difficulties in the peace process.

In order to face the spiraling situation, Rabin promised the launch of some extraordinary security measures, beginning with strengthening the demarcation lines between Israeli and Palestinian territories; it is no coincidence that the main word became *afrada* (separation). Israeli political and military authorities in fact set up a separation plan with the construction of a giant metal fence along the 500 km border with the Palestinian West Bank⁷²⁴.

The response of *Miflet Ha'Avoda* to developments in the peace talks was not uniform and there were different degrees of consent depending on the country the government was speaking with, indeed while there was a widespread support for the treaty with Jordan and there was a majority backing the deals with the PLO, regarding the negotiations with Syria, strong opposition raised inside the party. Indeed, there were pockets of internal resistance coming from hawkish members, such as Avigdor Kahalani and Emanuel Zissman⁷²⁵, which was starting to become a real split regarding the opposition to any territorial compromise with Syria on the Golan Heights⁷²⁶. Senior personalities of the party (among them also the secretary-general of the party Nissim Zvili), aware of the electoral damage that the peace process could inflict on the party, argued that parts of the implementation of the peace accords with the Palestinians should be postponed until after *Knesset* election: Israelis were becoming increasingly disenchanted by the Oslo process.

Rabin's typical response was to accuse those making such demands of losing their nerve⁷²⁷. Despite Rabin's decisiveness, the question of the return of the Golan Heights to Syria in exchange for peace, was potentially divisive for *Miflet Ha'Avoda* given the fact that the majority of 13.000 Golan settlers were established there by Labor administrations (after the Six Days War) and they all were loyal

⁷²⁴ Codovini G., *Geopolitica del conflitto* ..., op.cit., p. 62.

⁷²⁵ Their contrast with the party's willingness to entertain the idea of withdrawing from the Golan Heights in return for peace with Syria became so deep that, on March 7th 1996, they founded a new party, The Third Way (*HaDerech HaShlishit*), breaking away from *Miflet Ha'Avoda*.

⁷²⁶ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Meetings of Standing Committee* (Heb.), Secretary General of the Labor Party, 2-021-1995-272, 25/05/1995-31/05/1995, pp. 1-64.

⁷²⁷ A typical example of this occurred on July 4th 1994 at the weekly meeting of the Labor party *Knesset* faction where Rabin attacked some Labor MKs for panicking unnecessarily as the majority of the public still supported the peace policies of the government. Rabin finished his outburst by stating "thanks a lot panic mongers. Stop crying and start working"

supporters of the party; this was in contrast to the 100.000 plus Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza who generally support parties from the *Likud-led* block⁷²⁸. The difference was mainly based on the fact that the Golan settlers were encouraged to live there for security rather than political reasons (Rabin coined the phrase that the Golan Heights are: «tank land and not holy land⁷²⁹»).

Despite the climate of violence, the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip⁷³⁰, better known as Oslo II, was signed in Washington on September 28th 1995; its field of action was extremely important because it was foreseen that a political framework would be established in which to transfer the control of civil functions to the PNA in the most populous cities of the West Bank (including the Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron), corresponding to 4% of the West Bank, and another 25% for administrative and civil control. In the Gaza Strip, Israel maintained control over 35% of the territory that contained Jewish settlements and the roads leading to them, while the rest was transferred to the Palestinian National Authority. Moreover, was created a division of the West Bank into three areas A, B and C: Area A (consisted by densely populated Palestinian urban centers) was put under exclusive Palestinian control; in Area B (68%, consisted of Palestinian villages and less densely populated areas) the PNA exercised civil authority, while IDF continued to take care on security; while Area C (included settlements and military installations) under Israeli control alone.

On October 5th, the PM provided the *Knesset* with an overall assessment of Oslo II; his speech was clear⁷³¹ and explained that there was no intention to come back to the pre-1967 borders, to maintain the security border of the State in the Jordan Valley and to safeguard a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, while preserving the rights of the members of the other faiths, like the freedom to access and to worship in their holy places. The future Palestinian entity would have been less than one state, whose territory would be demilitarized. The *Knesset* ratified the agreement with a 61 majority in favor and 59 against. Despite these problems, the Labor leadership managed to maintain majority support during the conduct of the negotiations; a major factor for this was the ability of Peres and Rabin to work together and marshal all the clients behind the peace process. Moreover, Peres had specifically the role to prepare Israeli public opinion for a change of policy before Rabin committed himself to a position. In short, Peres was seen publicly as making difficult concessions thereby allowing Rabin to maintain his “Mr. Security” image. But, mainly, Rabin was very careful to make

⁷²⁸Lochery N., *Israeli Labor Party...*, op. cit., p.

⁷²⁹Hartley C. and Cossali P., *Survey of Arab-Israeli Relations*, Europa Publication, 2001, p.201.

⁷³⁰ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip - 28 September 1995*, Israel's Foreign Relations - Historical Documents, vol. 15: 1995-1996, n. 28.

⁷³¹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Address to the Knesset by Prime Minister Rabin on the Israel-Palestinian Interim Agreement*, Israel's Foreign Relations vol. 15: 1995-1996, n. 85, October 5th 1995.

many of the key *Knesset* debates on the Golan Heights and on peace deals, votes of confidence in his government.

Starting from the analysis offered by Reuven Y. Hazan, we have tried to report the events that had significant consequences for the party and the peace process⁷³², that is to mean those occurrences which show us how and when the peace process impacted on *Miflet Ha'Avoda* internal mechanisms and vice versa. This paragraph didn't want to report a complete historical analysis of the Oslo Process negotiations, rather its purpose is to highlight the most salient passages of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue explaining how Israeli domestic and foreign policy are reciprocally influenced. Moreover, as one can notice, this analysis is mainly focused on the Palestinian track of the peace process and that is not meant to suggest that the other talks (like the Syrian ones) were irrelevant but, as Shimon Sheve (former director-general of the prime minister's office) declared: «The explosive potential was in the Palestinian context; if we could disarm this it could lead to achievements on other fronts as well⁷³³». Indeed, the agreements with the PLO were the fundamental objective of the protests from the national-religious camp, not only because its strategic meaning, but most of all for its ideological and cultural significance. The Israeli right was perceiving that the vision of *Eretz Yisrael* was in jeopardy.

5.6 From political opposition to political assassination: how to change a nation

Since the Intifada, Rabin⁷³⁴ had clearly changed his mind, rationalizing that the Palestinian revolt was more than a local disturbance and coming to the conclusion that the solution was not relying in a military response. From this experience, came Rabin's commitment to change Israel's priorities, which produced immediate results as the freezing of the settlements and the reallocation of economic resources to social and economic problems within the Green Line. This move was applauded by US Secretary of State Baker and within few weeks since Rabin was elected, president Bush authorized the \$10 billion loan guarantees that had been denied to the previous government. The peace process seemed to be reenergized and a gradual softening of Israeli attitudes towards the withdrawal from the West Bank took place: 71% of the respondents thought that freezing the settlements would have helped to advance with the negotiations and 74% said they could accept withdrawal from at least some territories in exchange for peace⁷³⁵. In comparison only 21% thought no withdrawal should occur under any circumstances⁷³⁶.

⁷³² Hazan R. Y., *The Labor Party and the peace process*, op. cit.

⁷³³ *Ibidem*.

⁷³⁴ During the first months of the Palestinian insurgency, he was Minister of Defense and his attitude towards the situation was very controversial (as we have seen in the previous chapter, pp.).

⁷³⁵ Bar-On M., *In Pursuit...*, op. cit., p. 299.

⁷³⁶ A majority was still opposed to relinquish from the Golan Heights.

The deals with the PLO were far more controversial and were bitterly opposed not only by the right-wing parliamentary parties but also by hawkish elements from within the Labor Party; although Peres was seen as the principal controller of the various stages of the negotiations, it was Rabin who had the final veto on their outcome⁷³⁷. The PM, thanks to his reputation as “Mr. Security”, was seen by Israelis as the suitable leader to speak with Arafat and the PLO and to sign an accord with them (contrary to Peres and his persistent image problem). Indeed, Rabin’s reputation was vital in winning initial support from the public opinion, that was around 66%, once the deal was made public⁷³⁸.

Despite this positive numbers, this majority support remained fragile during all the Oslo Process, due to the strong linkage between Israeli personal security with the Palestinian question, vital element in order to understand Israeli public’s support for the deals with the PLO; in other words, the majority of Israelis initially supported Rabin’s cautious support for the DOP on the belief that it would have brought to an increase in Israeli personal security. However, the attacks by *Hamas* and the Islamic *Jihad*, together with Arafat’s failure to prevent them, led to a decrease in Israeli public backing for the deals⁷³⁹.

Since the signing of the DPO and the application of Gaza-Jericho, the Israeli right began to manifest itself aggressively against the peace process; every episode of Islamic terrorism was followed by demonstrations against Rabin. Palestinian peace enemies provided arguments and consent to their Israeli counterparts. The *Likud* and other opposition parties were very quick to exploit the attacks as proof of the failure of the DOP, which led Rabin (in more than one occasion) to accuse them to work with *Hamas* against the peace process: «The radical right is dancing on the blood of the victims of radical Islamic murderers, trying to turn these victims into a lever against the peace agreement[...] The fanatic murderers of the Islamic Jihad and *Hamas* are the means of the Israeli radical right. There is an evil and wicked circle of partnership between *Hamas* murderers and the Israeli radical right wing⁷⁴⁰».

These remarks were made following a demonstration organized by the *Likud* and other opposition groups in Jerusalem on July 2nd 1994 against the peace process deal. The demonstration ended in violence with a Jewish mob attempting to enter the old part of the city, with the intention of

⁷³⁷ Makovsky D., *Making Peace...*, op. cit., p.

⁷³⁸ The Peace Index, *May, July and August 1995*, (<http://www.peaceindex.org/indexYearsEng.aspx?num=16>)

⁷³⁹ This linkage between the Israeli support for the peace process and the frequency of the terror attacks is well reported and analyzed in the work of Arian A., *Security Threatened. Surveying Israeli Opinion on Peace and War*, Cambridge University Press, 1995. In this book those oscillations of public opinion’s attitudes towards the peace process are documented through a detailed series of polls and surveys.

⁷⁴⁰ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *Minutes from meetings* (Heb.), Archives of organizations and institutions *Mapai* - Labor Party, 2-023-1994-151, 29/05/1994-03/07/1994, pp. 113-116.

destroying Arab properties. The rally was characterized by the chant “Rabin traitor” and “We will drive Rabin out with fire and blood” which became the slogans of the opposition in subsequent rallies against the peace process up to Rabin’s assassination⁷⁴¹.

Both on the Israeli and Palestinian side⁷⁴², the agreement between Rabin and Arafat provoked strong opposition from the extremists; both were accused of betrayal and selling their own country. *Likud*'s leaders and extreme right-wing nationalists attacked the prime minister, accusing him of abandoning 120,000 settlers of occupied territories to the mercy of terrorists; the project for Gaza and Jericho was denounced as a bridgehead for the Palestinian state and as the beginning of the end of Great Israel. However, a survey published on The Guardian on September 16th 1993 showed considerable popular support to the premier and, on 1,000 Israelis interviewed, 65% claimed to approve the peace agreement and only 13% said it was very contrary.

The rejectionist organizations headed by *Hamas* and the Islamic Jihad were determined to undermine the accords through terrorism; April 1994 saw the start of a series of suicide bombings that hit Israelis all over the country. The suicide attacks undermined Israelis' belief in the Oslo Accords and in Rabin's peace policy: Israeli public opinion, which had supported the PM, began to veer to the right. Rabin's response to the violence was to argue that terrorist organizations were seeking to stop the political process and that they shouldn't be allowed to win by doing so. He was determined to advance the process.

The divisive debate on the future status of the Occupied Territories led to a level of polarization of Israeli politics not seen since the early days of the state with the battle between the Labor movement and the Revisionists; the opposition parties helped to create the volatile tone of the debate that produced an atmosphere which, many claim, resulted in Rabin's assassination. The Prime Minister responded to the attacks by the *Likud*, ultra-right parties and Settlers movement on the peace process in a similar way to what Ben-Gurion did in order to delegitimize the revisionists, including crude measures as his refusal to speak to the leader of the opposition, or even to refer to him by name in the *Knesset*.

The principal opposition figure to Rabin was Netanyahu; despite he was hugely politically experienced, he was confronted with the announcement of the Oslo Agreements in 1993 with a dilemma that no previous leader of *Likud* had had to face; in essence Netanyahu had to choose if to

⁷⁴¹ It is possible to find plenty of videos and documentaries on the internet which portray the level of verbal violence reached during in those days. Another interesting source it's the following documentary, *Seven days in November Yitzhak Rabin 1922-1995*, Holon: Classikaletet, 1997.

⁷⁴² Within the PLO, radical nationalists were now accused of abandoning the principles of power despite the fact that the leader succeeds in seizing the majority needed to favor the agreement between the 18 executive members outside the organization for the release of the Palestine covenant raises the implacable wrath of militant movements *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad who considered any compromise with the Jewish state a sacrilege

accept the deal as a *fait accompli*, or to reject the document and fight it using all means (parliamentary and extra-parliamentary at his disposal). While to choose the former was to renege *Likud's* dream of *Eretz Yisrael*, the inevitable consequence of the latter would be to push the party to the right⁷⁴³. It is worth noting that much of Netanyahu's public action was motivated by intra-party concerns and, in particular, the constant threat to his leadership from Sharon and Levy, for this reason he tended to show publicly a strong attitude against the peace process, far tougher than the one conceived his private opinion.

On the other side of the political spectrum, after Oslo, *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* was already seen as having shifted to a position more inclined toward negotiations; Netanyahu's decision completed the process of the abandonment of the center ground of Israeli politics. Consequently, the Israeli party system came to mirror the polarized system of the early years of the state.

It was a vacuum in the center of Israeli politics which allowed the development of protest movements which culminated in the murder of Rabin by an assassin who believed he had the political and religious legitimacy to carry it out. Rabin and *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* were elected largely because of its promise to divert economic resources from the Occupied Territories towards the development of infrastructures within the Green Line.

As the negotiations progressed, tension mounted between Israeli left and right. As far as the settlers were concerned, the entire process was perceived in the perspective of their nationalist belief as a betrayal of their fundamental values. For the 150.000 settler existing at the time, there could be no forgiving for what they termed "the crimes of Oslo"⁷⁴⁴. The extreme Right's struggle against Rabin government constantly straddled the thin line that separates civil resistance and protest from acts of violence. A permanent vociferous protest was maintained outside the Prime Minister's residence and he frequently needed a police escort to enter. The non-religious right was swept along on this wave of hostility and confrontation; representations of Rabin and Peres as "traitors" began to appear in public places (posters with Rabin wearing Arafat's or Nazi uniforms); moreover, some rabbis, linked to the more militant groups, declared that (according to their interpretation) anyone handing over areas of the Land of Israel was a traitor and as such subject to *din rodef*⁷⁴⁵ (law of the pursuer),

⁷⁴³ Many in the *Likud* argued that Netanyahu's choice was wrong and that he should have accepted the deal and worked to undermine it within the framework of the Oslo Agreement. Sharon, well-known for his hawkish views, supported this point of view.

⁷⁴⁴ Shapira A., *Israel...*, op.cit., p. 434.

⁷⁴⁵ *Din Rodef* (**Hebrew**: דין רודף), literally means "law of the pursuer", is a part of traditional Jewish law. It is a status in *Halakhah* of a person pursuing another in order to kill him. The origin of this law can be found in the Babylonian Talmud (Tractate *Sanhedrin*, 73a). However, there are a few restrictions to this law: the allowance to kill the *rodef* does not apply in a case where lesser means would prevent the innocent's murder. In addition,

that is he should be killed. But they were not alone, the political leaders of the traditional Right (to name a few: Netanyahu, Sharon, Eitan Zebulon Hammer) often joined the choir.

The backdrop of this inflamed mood was the fragility of the Rabin government. Although *Shas* leadership supported the Oslo Accords, the party's rank thought differently due to the fact that their voters supported the right-wing block and being part of a government of the Left contravened their beliefs. This was a signal that pressure from the party's militant would lead it to resign from the government. After Deri's own resignation (following charges of corruption against him), *Shas* did quit the coalition. Then, the Rabin government held only 58 MKs and was dependent on the support of the Arab members and, from there on, the settlers accused the Cabinet of making decisions fateful to the Jewish people when the government had not a Jewish majority. Notwithstanding the right's de-legitimization of the Oslo Process, Rabin did not desist: he was adamant in advancing the peace process without taking into account the strong opposition manifested by the settlers. His determination not to be diverted from his course was also due to his lack of empathy with the national-religious claims, which didn't belong to his set of values and attitudes.

It was partly in order to disperse this violent climate that Peace Now, Labor Party and *Meretz* organized the pacifist rally of November 4th 1995 in Tel Aviv's King's Square in Israel, with around 150,000 people⁷⁴⁶. The initiative was an energetic tonic for Rabin and Peres, both on stage to meet the crowd that was there to support the peace process and their work. The usually introverted Prime Minister appeared to the public radiant and, for the first time, he told about his personal feelings and experience on the path to reach a final agreement with the PLO. Despite all the difficulties, in that occasion he was showing his gratitude for the support they got.

That night there was another memorable scene; Rabin hug Peres in front of the exultant crowd. Then, the PM made a speech: «I was a soldier for twenty-seven years, I fought for a long time because there was no prospect of peace. But I think today there is a chance for peace, a great opportunity to be caught». He then concluded, «This event should send a message to the Israeli public, to all the Jews in the world, to the crowds in the Arab countries and to the whole world. The nation of Israel wants peace, supports peace and for this I thank you⁷⁴⁷». At the end of the event as the people began to leave the square, Rabin and the other authorities moved to get in the car; in this short way, Yigal Amir, a twenty-seven-year-old Bar Ilan law student, walked over the bodyguards and fired three shots at Rabin, who, hit back from two bullets, died on the way to the hospital. In the pocket of his jacket was found a sheet of paper carefully bent with the words of a song he had sung during the

according to the Rambam, killing a *rodef* who may have been stopped by lesser means constitutes murder, though the punishment for a murderer in this case is not dealt out by *bet din* (judicial court).

⁷⁴⁶ The presence of police was massive because some possible Arab terror attacks were foreseen.

⁷⁴⁷ Rabin Y., *The Last Speech Address by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at a Peace Rally Kings of Israel Square, Tel Aviv November 4, 1995*, The Yitzhak Rabin Center Archives, Tel Aviv (<http://www.rabincenter.org.il>).

demonstration; the “Song of Peace⁷⁴⁸” was stained with his blood and was perforated by one of the shotguns shot by the assassin.

Amir, captured on the spot, said during the interrogations that he wanted to stop the peace process and prevent the sale of part of Israel. The killer had repeatedly stated that he wanted to kill the Prime Minister and immediately after the assassination said he had acted to save the Jewish people, applying Jewish religious law, according to which a Jew who endangers the lives of other Jews must be killed. He said to the inquiry commission: «When I shot at Rabin, I felt I was shooting a terrorist⁷⁴⁹». Amir was sentenced to life imprisonment and never showed any remorse for his act. As soon as the investigations went to the militant right circles⁷⁵⁰, attended by the killer, the political parties closest to the religious-nationalist movement began to accuse the government of taking too drastic measures in an attempt to prove (for political ends) that the assassination had been instigated. Peres and his colleagues, near imminent elections, fearful of embarrassing the moderate public opinion, left the investigations to be conducted under the usual routine and only one of Amir's friends (Margalit Har-Sefi) was sentenced for not having reported his project⁷⁵¹.

The terror attacks after the Oslo Accords triggered an unprecedented reaction among Israelis which contributed to the creation of such a violent environment, where verbal confrontation had translated several times into physical confrontation between representatives of the two factions, never experienced before. The shock of the murder was tremendous and it exposed Israeli democracy's vulnerability. Rabin underestimated the ideals that animated the national-religious right and the risk that such political involvement could transform the public debate into a violent confrontation ; as a profoundly secular man, he did not understand the strong motivations at the basis of that opposition and he was inclined to consider it as an expression of a marginal adverse political group, although since months written threats to on the Prime Minister's life appeared publicly on the and mystical religious ceremonies⁷⁵² had been conducted to enlist divine forces to kill him. The truth was that very few Israelis could even seriously take into consideration the possibility a Prime Minister of Israel being assassinated by an Israeli. The horror of an assassination of a Jew by the

⁷⁴⁸ *Shir laShalom* was composed in 1969 and became the peace movement's anthem since then.

⁷⁴⁹ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p. 598.

⁷⁵⁰ In this milieu, Amir grew up, along with other young radicals whose formation was based on the legacy of the national-religious party *Kach*, founded by rabbi Meir Kahane and was banned by Israeli government in 1994.

⁷⁵¹ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p. 788.

⁷⁵² It refers to the Kabbalistic ceremony of the *Pulsa Denura* (פולסיִדנורָא, “lashes of fire”) in which the angels of destruction are invoked to block the heavenly forgiveness of the subject's sins, causing all the curses named in the Bible to befall him resulting in his death. However, the Torah prohibits praying that something bad should happen to another person. Prior to the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, there were reports that the curse had been recited against him.

hands of another Jew had created a profound split within Israeli society, thereby undermining national solidarity to the very basis of the historical experience of the state of Israel. The shock was tremendous.

Rabin's death also posed the thorny issue of his succession, for the peace process was closely identified with the leaders who had longed to initiate dialogue, conclude the agreements and assume political responsibility; Shimon Peres thus appeared as his natural successor. The murder of Rabin, while a major tragedy, did not derail (in the short term) the peace process as Amir intended; indeed, there was some evidence to suggest that Rabin's death had the opposite effect, speeding up the implementation of Oslo II by withdrawing the IDF from the Palestinian cities, where the first Palestinian elections took place on time on January 1996, producing the expected victory of Arafat and his party *Fatah*.

Shimon Peres assumed the role of prime minister since November 1995 to the end of May 1996; during those months he demonstrated to be actually Rabin's heir, totally committing himself in the prosecution of the peace process; notwithstanding his decisiveness and the outcomes achieved, in the public opinion's eyes, he turned out to be a too fragile political personality in order to achieve the main result that the Oslo Process had promised: a final peace agreement which would have granted Israel's security, at that time, desired by Israelis more than ever. He was not "Mr. Security" and, in 1996, he had to leave the path he had taken with his colleague.

Chapter 6. THE SEEDS OF LABOR DECLINE AND THE CRISIS OF THE OSLO PROCESS (1995-2001)

This last chapter has been thought in order to provide an analysis of the electoral dynamics which affected the Labor Party in 1996 and 1999 elections, after Rabin's death. The choice to examine the electoral turnout until 2001 was taken due some considerations: 1996 and 1999 are the last two real occasions for *Miflet Ha'Avoda* to be competitive and succeeding in providing a convincing electoral platform for polls provide a real political alternative to the electorate, whereas 2000 is a catalyst year because the failure of Camp David summit and the breakout of the *al-Aqsa* Intifada that definitively ended the Oslo's peace process. This new epoch is characterized by the decline of the "land for peace" approach and by the clear political and electoral decline of the Labor Party.

The elections of 2001 were easily won by Ariel Sharon⁷⁵³ (1928 - 2014), the *Likud*'s candidate, which succeed in interpreting Israelis dissatisfaction towards the peace process and their need for security, becoming the main voice in Israeli politics. Besides this phenomenon other two dynamics were taking place during the Nineties: on one side the fractionalization of the *Knesset* through the proliferation of the sub-identity group vote and, on the other the polarization of the electorate between the two main political camps (right and left) in the context of the direct election for the Prime Minister (introduced with the electoral reform in the 1996 elections).

The reinforcement of the cross-cutting cleavages of Israeli society, the delusion towards the Oslo process and the strong connection between the territory-peace issue with the definition of Israeli national identity originated the conditions which led to the overall crisis of *Miflet Ha'Avoda*. Taking into account the transformations and events that involved Israeli political system in the previous decades, this chapter, wants to provide a multi-dimensional framework in the attempt to be show the conditions in which *Ha'Avoda* ongoing electoral decline originated.

⁷⁵³ Ariel "Arik" Sharon was an Israeli statesman, former Prime Minister and retired Major-General who served in the IDF for more than twenty-five years. Sharon was appointed commander of a Paratroop Corps in 1956 and fought in the Sinai Campaign. Sharon resigned from the army in June 1972, but was recalled to active military service in the 1973 Yom Kippur War to command an armored division. He led the crossing of the Suez Canal which helped secure an Israeli victory in the war and eventual peace with Egypt. In 1981, Ariel Sharon was appointed Defense Minister, serving in this post during the Lebanon War, which was followed by the Kahan Commission of inquiry for the episodes took place in Sabra e Chatila. In September 28th 2000, Sharon made a visit to Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which was the sparkle that triggered the Second Intifada. In a special election held on February 6th 2001, Ariel Sharon was elected Prime Minister.

6.1 The struggle for national identity. 1996 elections

The two key-issues of peace and security dominated the short Peres government (1995-1996) just as they had done with Rabin's. On the question of peace, the new Labor-led government quickly moved on to implement as much of the Oslo Accords as it could; this was possible due to the short-term shift in Israeli public opinion in favor of the Agreements with the PLO in the aftermath of Rabin assassination, giving the fact that the deals were perceived by the public as Rabin's legacy⁷⁵⁴.

Peres decision to move forward the elections from November to end of May was closely related to the fact the final status talk with the Palestinians were due to start; it was clear for the PM that these negotiations would lead to some difficult and probably unpopular decisions for the government to make. Peres's rationale was therefore to avoid having to go to the electorate for a new mandate in such a sensitive time. This decision to delay the electoral turnout cost very much to Peres in terms of popularity, both inside the party and among the people⁷⁵⁵. His team argued that the continuation of the peace process had the priority on any other type of considerations, but, in retrospect, this strategy proved to be a costly mistake.

6.1.1 *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* and *Likud*'s electoral strategies

The campaign for the 14th *Knesset* was one of the calmest in Israeli history in which the political language and debate were moderate and kept under strict control. There are two main reasons: the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the implementation of the new electoral reform into the electoral system, resulting from the modification of the basic law⁷⁵⁶ "The Government"⁷⁵⁷ (developed by Rabin's government in 1992⁷⁵⁸), which called for the direct elections of PM. The first event caused a significant shock, felt by most Israelis: a Jew had assassinated the Prime Minister of Israel in the name of national-religious ideology. The psychological blow was still strong and there were many fears that the political (and physical) violence could take place once again⁷⁵⁹: «Fear of

⁷⁵⁴ Lochery N., *The Israeli Labor Party...*, op. cit., p.253.

⁷⁵⁵ According to a poll conducted by an Israeli newspaper on December 1995, Peres enjoyed an average of 21 percentage points ahead Netanyahu.

⁷⁵⁶ Since the Constituent Assembly and the *First Knesset* were unable to put a constitution together, the *Knesset* started to legislate basic laws on various subjects. After all the basic laws will be enacted, they will constitute together, with an appropriate introduction and several general rulings, the constitution of the State of Israel.

⁷⁵⁷ *The Knesset, Basic Law: The Government (1968 - null)*, The Existing Basic Laws: Full Texts, (https://www.Knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic1_eng.htm).

⁷⁵⁸ *The Knesset, Basic Law: The Government (1992 - null)*, The Existing Basic Laws: Full Texts, (https://www.Knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic7_eng.htm).

⁷⁵⁹ Also because Peres received a number of death threats and he was closely guarded.

another Yigal Amir has forced Peres to become the country's first Prime Ministerial candidate to campaign without direct and unmediated contact with the public. There is no way to measure the mood on "the street" toward Peres because, in this campaign, there is no street⁷⁶⁰».

On the other hand, the reform was a dramatic change in the competitive electoral orientation of the Israeli party system; it forced the two big parties to concentrate on attracting the floating voters, located in the center and, consequently, to tone down their ideologies. Now, we are going to examine how *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* and *Likud* managed their electoral campaign, in the wave of such events.

Strictly connected to the electoral reform, was also the fact that it was almost impossible to keep separated the campaigns of the two major parties for PM and for the *Knesset*; at the very end, there was only a comprehensive electoral competition and the race for the premiership resulted to be more relevant⁷⁶¹. The *Knesset* elections were, not only relegated to a lower level of importance but they were actually absent among the issues debated during the campaign, stressing instead the contest between Shimon Peres and Benyamin Netanyahu; indeed, the two candidates thought correctly that, whoever won the contest for premiership would have also been able to form the govern coalition. Moreover, the general shift towards the center that took place was expected, both Peres and Netanyahu were committed to the task of converting the floating voters and this brought to choose a positive campaign, based on moderation and pragmatism, on one side, while on the other to organize a negative campaign against the rival.

Shimon Peres decided to move towards the center on two level: the first one consisted in a shift away from the left, taking positions closer to *Likud*; the second one involved a turn toward the religious parties. An example of the first tactic can be seen in Labor's platform with the reappearance of the Golan Heights defined as "an area of national importance for the State of Israel⁷⁶²"; with the *Likud* solidity against any compromise over that territory (and the presence of *HaDerech HaShlishit*⁷⁶³), the elimination of any expression that wouldn't have suggested *Ha'Avoda* commitment towards the retention of some significant areas, could have scared off many undecided voters. Also, the attempt

⁷⁶⁰ Halevi Y., *Peres preaching to the converted*, Jerusalem Report, June 13th 1996, p.15.

⁷⁶¹ Hazan R., *The Electoral Consequences of Political Reform*, in Arian A. and Shamir M., *The Elections in Israel 1996*, SUNY series in Israeli Studies, 1999. p.166.

⁷⁶² The Moshe Sharett Labor Party Archives, *Labor Party platform for the 14th Knesset - 1996*, (<http://www.archavoda.org.il/AvodaArch/matza/index.asp>).

⁷⁶³ It began as a political movement in 1994, and led the struggle against the plan for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria. Shortly after the movement became a political party in early 1996, *Knesset* members Avigdor Kahalani and Emanuel Sussman resigned from the Labor party and joined it.

made by Peres to reach an agreement with the ultra-Orthodox parties⁷⁶⁴ demonstrated that Labor leader was trying to broaden its electoral constituency both on security and religion, in order to win the elections. He knew that it would have been expensive for Labor in terms of the reduction of the seats in the *Knesset* that would be assigned to the members of the party, but it was a price he was willing to pay⁷⁶⁵.

At the same time, *Likud's* shift to the center was, to an extent, a reaction to Labor tactic. In mid-April, Netanyahu's policy guidelines were announced and a paper was issued, called "The Principles of Netanyahu Government for Continued Negotiations with the Palestinians", referring not only to a willingness in negotiating with them, but also included the acknowledgment of the Oslo Accords as well⁷⁶⁶. Netanyahu stated for the first time ever that he accepted the PLO as a partner for negotiations; this statement was aimed to attract the center-ground voters who, at the same time, supported the Oslo agreement but also wanted a stronger action of the government in order to increase Israelis security.

In accepting the Oslo agreements, the leader of *Likud* helped to blur the difference between himself and Peres, moving the focus of the electoral campaign on the line of personal credibility to govern the country, leaving behind the ideological debate⁷⁶⁷.

In addition, Netanyahu adopted the slogan "Peace with security" and concentrated on the fact that peace was possible only under a nationalist government: the campaign was focuses on Israelis fears over personal security and the fact that the Labor-led government had compromised security in its search for peace. For these reasons, *Likud's* TV propaganda was vivid, showing footage of the bloody aftermath of suicide bus attacks; aiming to play on the electorate's sense of insecurity, the party's central theme was "this is not real peace".

Another strategy followed by Netanyahu was a negative campaign portraying Peres as not as security-minded as Rabin and Labor's peace initiatives as leading to the deterioration of personal security; but despite this tactic, polls showed that twice as many respondents believed that Peres, and not Netanyahu, was the candidate who "could be more trusted", "would better protect Israel's

⁷⁶⁴ We are referring, for example, to *Agudat Yisrael* and *Degel HaTorah* which, since 1992, formed a unique front called United Torah Judaism (*Yahadut HaTorah*).

⁷⁶⁵ The search for the center is important in order to understand the decision by Labor not to feature Rabin's assassination in the campaign. This was clearly a strategic decision, designed in order to attract the undecided by emphasizing the common ground rather than the divisive issues.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ha'aretz*, May 8th 1996.

⁷⁶⁷ This factor highlighted the decline of the importance of the role of ideology in Israeli party system

interest” and was “more convincing⁷⁶⁸”. In order to improve its image as a man of security, Peres decided to adopt Rabin’s concept of *afrada* (separation), renovating the concept and meaning of fencing off Israel from contact with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza⁷⁶⁹. Another manifestation of this new tough security policy was the beginning of the “Grapes of Wrath” operation, in April 1996, against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon⁷⁷⁰, after a renovated wave of missiles launched by the militias on Israeli urban centers in the North of the country.

Now that the context in which the electoral competition was played has been explained, it is important to show the contents that were proposed by the parties. Regarding the dominant issues involved in 1996 campaign, territories and peace were the leading topics, with socio-economic problems ignored by all the major parties; this was partly a mistake made by *Mifletet Ha’Avoda* which was perceived by the public as effective in carrying out its economic policies. Moreover, the party did not enough to illustrate the fact that a slowing down or eventual collapse of the peace process would greatly endanger the economic development. Instead, major efforts were put in the realization of the slogan “a strong Israel with Peres⁷⁷¹”, designed to build up Peres’ credentials in what was perceived to be both his weakest point: providing security. It has to be noticed that this strategy was quite the opposite than to that employed by Rabin’s team in 1992, which had attempted to focus on the issues in which Rabin and the party were perceived to enjoy an advantage over the *Likud* among the people.

Basically, this campaign appeared to be based on Haim Ramon’s belief that the party and Peres were ahead in the polls and on the presumption that if there would have not been additional suicide bomb attack during the latter stages of the campaign, then Labor Party would be victorious⁷⁷².

⁷⁶⁸ Vadana Y., *Survey for the Labor Party*, Panorama, January 1996, pp.14, 40-44, as reported in Peretz D. and Doron G., *Israel’s 1996 Elections: a Second Political Earthquake?*, Middle east Journal, vol.50, n.4, Autumn 1996, p. 534.

⁷⁶⁹ This separation policy involved the construction of a fence along the Green Line. Moshe Shahal, the Minister of Interior, that the 200\$ billion-plan would not be 100 %successful.

⁷⁷⁰ IDF was in Lebanon since Operation Peace in Galilee, promoted by Prime Minister Begin and his Ministry of Defense Sharon.

⁷⁷¹ Lockery N., *The Israeli Labor...*, op. cit., p.257

⁷⁷² Such a naïve attitude, insisting a lot on the developments of the peace process, is also evident in the structure of Labor Party’s electoral program, where (in the section “Policy for peace and Security”, pp.5-10) it is predominant the word “*shalom*”. Moreover, in this part of the party platform, is explicitly expressed a program “in order to end the Arab-Israeli conflict by 2000”. See ANNEX I – *Mifletet Ha’Avoda’s Political Platforms for Knesset Elections*, 1, *Labor Party’s platform for the Thirteenth Knesset*, 1996 –The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl-Israel, p. 342-347.

Unfortunately for him, it didn't happen. On the contrary, by early 1996, a series of tragic events led again to sharpened rhetoric between Labor and *Likud*: Hamas carried out suicide bombings in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Ashkelon, taking scores of Israeli civilian lives, changing the political atmosphere. In this context, it became important for *Mifletet Ha'Avoda's* to show Israeli its efficacy in to provide security which was the dominant issue debated in the electoral race.

Both the terrorist attacks and the campaign increased the perception of personal threat, having also a direct and immediate impact on the performance of the two major political parties. The dimension that were most affected were those most significant for the voters and they were at the expenses of Labor and in favor of *Likud*: the mood of Israeli public suggested⁷⁷³ that the party which could handle better terrorism and which one was more likely to lead to true peace; indeed, suicide bombings helped in increasing *Likud's* appealing due to the fact that it was already perceived as the party with the stronger attitude towards securitization.

Despite a basic gap on the most fundamental principles between Labor and *Likud*, in the 1996 elections It was clear that both sides decided to blur their ideological differences in order to attract the floating voters. This intentional blurring seems to have produced a paradox, where each side thought that its opponent's policies were favored by that section of the electorate: *Likud* perceived that that the vacillating voters wanted to achieve a final peace agreement and it adopted some leftist policies, while Labor began to mimic numerous *Likud* principles. The overall result was that ideology took a backseat in the race for Prime Minister, while individual factors, such as credibility, rose to the forefront: «The Israeli voter was presented with a Labor candidate in *Likud's* clothing and vice-versa; "Peace with security" opposed to "Peace with security", or Coca-Cola versus Pepsi-Cola⁷⁷⁴».

6.1.2 The performances of the two main political blocks

Both elections were held on May 29 1996 and Netanyahu's victory by only 30.000 votes illustrates the narrow margins which now appear to decide Israeli elections. He defeated Peres by winning the 50.5% of the 3 million votes cast: he received about 55% of the Jewish vote, while his opponent more than 90% of the votes from non-Jews⁷⁷⁵. What is interesting to examine is the high rates of invalid votes⁷⁷⁶ in the Prime Minister race that was around 4.8% (almost 150.000 votes), more than double compared to the rate for the *Knesset* (2.2%). These numbers suggested that if they

⁷⁷³ The Peace Index, *April-May 1996*, (<http://www.peaceindex.org/indexYearsEng.aspx?num=15>).

⁷⁷⁴ Hazan R, *The Electoral consequences...*, op. cit., p. 173.

⁷⁷⁵ Arian and Shamir, *Israel elections 1996...*, op. cit., p. 4.

⁷⁷⁶ In the *Knesset* elections 3.119.195 votes were cast, of which 67.601 could not be considered

were for Peres, the result could have been very different; he received 1.471.566 preferences against the 1,501,023 for Netanyahu⁷⁷⁷.

This hypothesis could be made because many of those spoiled votes came from the Israeli Arab community, in protest against the “Grapes of Wrath” campaign; this operation was costly both materially and politically; the cost was over \$200 million in military expenditure, considering also more \$30 million in damages caused by katyusha falling on Israel⁷⁷⁸ The Labor-led government was highly criticized but, above all, the operation had serious repercussions within Israel’s Arab community, who decided to punish casting blank ballots for the election of Prime Minister in May . Shimon Peres failed for a fifth time to win a mandate from Israelis to form a government. The *Mifletet Ha’Avoda* saw its number of seats fall from 44 in 1992 to 34 in 1996 but, despite the losses it remained the largest party in the *Knesset*. *Likud -Tsomet* declined from 40 seats in 1992 (32 *Likud*, 8 *Tsomet*) to 32 in 1996⁷⁷⁹. The party system was fragmented as never before.

The group interests emerged, represented by Arab parties (*Hadash* and the Arab Democratic List for example, raising their representation from 5 to 9 seats); religious parties, such as *Shas*, *Mafdal* and *Orthodox United Torah* which experienced a grow from 16 to 23 seats, the good first performance of the Russian party *Yisrael Ba’Aliyah* (7) and *HaDerech HaShlishit*, a centrist party formed by former Labor members.

This electoral turnout produced a more fractionalized parliament, with the two main competitors *Mifletet Ha’Avoda* and *Likud*, weaker than in the past elections; the two parties captured only half of the *Knesset*’s seats, leaving 54 of the 120 MKs split among nine other parties. Labor Party remained the largest political formation (34 seats) but Netanyahu’s was able to conquer the mandate as prime minister .

In order to understand better these results, it is necessary to observe the voting patterns which guided electoral preferences; also, this time the electoral conflict showed the traditional voting patterns of Israeli society, based on socio-demographic divisions: the majority of *Ashkenazi*, secular, middle-class and the Israeli-Arabs supported Peres, while the *Mizrachi*, religious, working-class voted for Netanyahu⁷⁸⁰. The latter received 55% of the Jewish vote compared to the 45% obtained by the Labor candidate; at the same time 53% of the population supported Oslo II (1995) and 41%

⁷⁷⁷ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel 1996*, n. 47.

⁷⁷⁸ Jerusalem Post International, May 4 1996, p.3.

⁷⁷⁹ Knesset Election Result, Election for the Fourteenth Knesset – 1996 (https://Knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res14.htm).

⁷⁸⁰ Peretz D. and Doron G., *Israel’s 1996 Elections...*, op. cit., p. 543.

were opposed, showing that this cleavage was channeled into two principal issues: the peace process and the role of religion in defining State institutions and values.⁷⁸¹

Thus, the total number of seats for Labor and the *Likud* was reduced from 76 after the previous elections, to 66 in 1996. The decline of the two major parties can be seen a consequence of the new electoral system where, Israelis voted in two ways: the election of the Prime Minister was characterized by a concentration of personality politics, instead for *Knesset* elections, voters were more likely to select a party that reflected their opinion on several issues.

Netanyahu's victory, albeit narrow, meant that as directly elected Prime Minister he could conduct the coalition negotiations to form a new government from a position of strength, thus relegating the Labor Party to opposition even if it remained the single largest party in the *Knesset*. It is clear, therefore, that in the new electoral system the election of the premier will largely determine which of the major parties occupies a pivotal role in coalition negotiations even if that party has not emerged from the *Knesset* election with the highest number of seats.

Peres' poor electoral performance could be attributed also to the re-emergence of the ineffective party's machine, which set for the party's candidate an as much ineffective electoral campaign. This strategic failure can be perceived because the key constituencies which had voted for Rabin in 1992 did not vote for Peres or *Miflet Ha'Avoda* in 1996, determining Labor's loss: Soviet immigrants, confirming their previous vote as a vote of protest against *Likud* and the *Sephardi* community which switched their preferences for Rabin, they felt this time unable to back Peres because he was still strongly perceived as representative of an elitist, secular, *Ashkenazi* electorate.

About the voting trend among Israeli Arabs, it has to be underlined how they deliberately spoiled their ballot papers (20.000), as a form of protest against operation "Grapes of Wrath", launched by Peres (even if the 95% vote for him). Taking into consideration the lack of support from these groups, it is evident that Peres was able to attract and to conquer the traditional Labor's supporters (mainly middle-class Jews with European origins): «The blame [for the election performance] lies in the fact that this is a party built around a yuppie, superior, *Ashkenazi* elite which doesn't grasp the sensitivities of Israeli society⁷⁸²[...]».

Both Peres and Netanyahu concentrated their efforts in convincing the leaders of the religious parties and Soviet immigrants to endorse their candidature. If, regarding the religious parties, Netanyahu correctly believed that they were natural allies to support his vision of Israel, instead the voting preferences of the Soviet *Aliyah* immigrants were less clear. Notwithstanding the fact that these immigrants were viewed as "security hawks", suggested their stronger affinity with the right

⁷⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 546.

⁷⁸² Yudelman M., *Into the political desert*, Jerusalem Post International, June 22 1996, p. 8.

camp than with Peres, the creation of the party *Yisrael Ba'Aliyah*⁷⁸³ effectively attracted Russian voters away from the two major parties. In this way *Miflet Ha'Avoda* would lose many of the votes it had won in 1992⁷⁸⁴. Despite the fact that the conditions of this group were improved during the four years of Labor-led government, the decision to form an immigrants' party reflected their dissatisfaction with both *Likud* and Labor

6.2 How Israelis voted? The link between identity and issues

For the first time in Israel it was used a system of split ballots: one for the office of the Prime Minister and the other one for political parties. This method was chosen because it was supposed to grant extra power to the PM and, thus, to increase the general stability of the government coalition. Instead, the major outcomes involving the structure of the Israeli political system were: the strengthening of the boundaries between the two main political blocs and a higher expression of pluralistic, ethnic, religious and cultural interests of the electorate, affirmed by voting for smaller parties.

The voters intuitively understood the potential of the reform; large parties were abandoned since voters assessed that policy would be by the election of the Prime Minister and not by the vote for the *Knesset* and accordingly the vote for parliament became the arena for sectarian contestation⁷⁸⁵; the naïve expectation that voters wouldn't split their vote to let the Prime Minister they chose to more forcefully affect policy has been found unattainable. After satisfying themselves with the vote for the prime minister that could reflect either preferences over security issues and general public interests, voters could choose their representatives in accordance with their particular interests.

Moreover, we have to take into account that also Rabin's murder in 1995 contributed to sharpen the boundaries and the identity inside Israeli society, through a political dynamic of mobilization and counter-mobilization; the four years of Labor-led rule were indeed characterized by strong attitudes towards secularization which, by contrast, stimulated religious sensitivity.

The major changes were thus taking place inside the two blocks and not between them; *Miflet Ha'Avoda* and *Likud* were considering "ruling parties", losing their ability to absorb sub-identities and sub-cultures within their constituencies and thus control cleavages in the Israeli society; the new

⁷⁸³ The party was an initiative of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Its leader, Natan Sharansky, was a former "Refusenik" or "Prisoner of Zion", a term used to refer to individuals whom the Soviet regime had barred from emigration to Israel, and imprisoned. As a sectorial party, *Yisrael B'Aliyah* was intended to promote the interests of immigrants from the FSU.

⁷⁸⁴ The vast majority of these voters chose Labor in order to protest against the treatment by *Likud*-led government.

⁷⁸⁵ Arian A. and Shamir M., *The Elections in Israel...*, op. cit., p. 5.

electoral system contributed to transform social structure in Israel along the lines of major distinct sub-cultures which, according to Baruch Kimmerling⁷⁸⁶ the six cleavages are: the Orthodox and Ultra-orthodox (*haredi*) culture, the national religious vision, the Jewish secularist approach, the oriental traditionalist attitude, the Arab subculture and the Russian enclave.

These cross-cutting lines already existed since many years⁷⁸⁷ and they already provided strong voting pattern but, the elections of 1996 reinforced them giving more power and legitimization. All of these have institutional and territorial bases, a distinct social stratification and their members could also be recognized by their daily clothing.

What is more important, they represented strong pattern of values, symbols and attitudes which can be detected in electoral results and in voting trends oriented by ideology which, in the 1996 case, were more strongly driven by issues (as we are going to see in the next paragraph). This aspect is very interesting because electoral politics in Israel provide an example where identity dilemmas intertwine issue and social groups-based voting, this is particularly true for the electoral turn out that we are analyzing, which can be read in this framework. Thanks to the analysis done by Arian Asher and Michal Shamir⁷⁸⁸, which studied the cleavage systems and voting patterns to support their claims about the long-term trends in issue and social-group-based voting, we can examine in depth the primary role of collective identity concerns in the 1996 elections. The results coming from this research emphasized that, first of all, among socio-demographic characteristics taken into consideration⁷⁸⁹, religiosity was the most relevant for the vote and, secondly, that the issue of collective and national identity⁷⁹⁰ raised strongly in these elections.

Issues differ in their potential to generate group allegiance: for example, economic topics are weaker (for example how to handle inflation) rather than identity questions (in this case the debate on the State's boundaries definition). Some issues may be only weakly related to specific social groupings, but other issues can connect and reinforce existing cleavage structures by providing new reasons for the same people and groups to support the same parties. Identity questions trigger group allegiance,

⁷⁸⁶ Kimmerling B., *Elections as a Battleground over collective identity*, in Arian A. and Shamir M., *Elections in Israel...*, op. cit., pp 33-40.

⁷⁸⁷ The creation and the development of these deep rifts among Israelis are well explained in Del Sarto R., *I confini del consenso. La Guerra dei Sei Giorni e la frammentazione della società e della politica israeliana*, in Marzano A., *Israele e Palestina. Un conflitto lungo un secolo*, Plus, 2003, pp. 33-47.

⁷⁸⁸ Arian A. and Shamir M., *Collective Identity and Electoral Competition in Israel*, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 93, No. 2, June 1999, pp. 265-277.

⁷⁸⁹ In Arian and Shamir's analysis, they considered voting behavior in reference to the major socio-demographic variables (Age, Gender, Density of Dwelling, Education, Income, Religious Observance, and Ethnic Background) alone to allow for the most comprehensive test of the role of social group in voting.

⁷⁹⁰ This term is used as an expression of the boundaries chosen both in the sense of dividing groups into different communal and social entities and dividing nation-states territorially or geographically.

thus, the extent to which the vote is related to group characteristics of voters depends, at least in part, on the nature of the issues on the agenda: when identity dilemmas are present, such as the role of religion and the future of the territories in Israel, they involve basic collective identity linked to conceptions about territorial and social communal boundaries.

The peace process, the Oslo agreements, and the questions of territorial compromise embody the policy implications of those collective identity dilemmas regarding geographical boundaries and Israel's relations with other nations, in particular its Arab neighbors and, even more specifically, the Palestinians.

If dilemmas of collective identity tie into social cleavages, identity types are strongly related to social groupings: religious, *Sephardi*, less educated, and lower status workers have voted for the right-wing *Likud* and religious parties, whereas the Left (Labor and *Meretz*) has had a disproportionate share of secular, upper-class *Ashkenazi* voters. Asher and Shamir confirmed that the most distinct identity scale types in terms of ethnicity are Israeli Doves identifiers (category 1), almost 60% of whom are *Ashkenazi*, and all Jewish identifiers, irrespective of their external identity (categories 3, 6, 9), 60% of whom are *Sephardi*. As we move from Israeli to Jewish identification within each external identity type, *Sephardi* ethnicity increases. As we move from Dove to Hawk identifiers within the Israeli and middle identity categories, the more *Sephardi* they become, but the differences are smaller than in the comparison along the internal identity dimension, and this relationship does not hold for the Jewish identity type. The most distinct identity scale types in terms of religious observance are, on the one hand, the Israeli identifiers (categories 1, 4, 7), who are overwhelmingly secular (more than 90% observe only some or no religious practice) and, on the other hand, the Jewish Hawk identity type (category 9), 65% of whom are highly observant Jews (observing all or most of the *Halacha*). As we move from Israeli to Jewish identity (within all external identity categories), and from the Dove to the Hawk pole on external identity (within the middle and Jewish internal identity categories), the percentage of religious respondents increases.

The 1996 *Knesset* results reflected the expression of ethnic and religious identities to an unprecedented degree, but the core issues revolved around dilemmas of collective identity and the issues debated involved the territorial boundaries of the state and conflict over the definition of Israel as a “Jewish state”.

The two scholars tested the “collective identity” conceptualization in order to gain better understanding of these dimensions through questions⁷⁹¹ made to the respondents of a survey conducted before 1996 electoral turnout. The May 1996 pre-election poll included several items intended to measure more extensively collective identity, which has an internal and an external dimension; the external aspect concerns identity in terms of land, borders, and relations with Israel's

⁷⁹¹ These questions were about values priorities regarding the definition of Israel and Israelis identity, the role of democracy and religion, the peace talks, the agreement about the establishment of a Palestinian state and the relationships with Israeli Arabs.

Arab neighbors, while the internal character is about citizenship, nationhood, and religion in the Jewish state. The internal aspect concerns the nature of the Jewish state and society; this notion of Israel as a Jewish state provides a common denominator for most Israeli Jews and that secular nationalism is beset by religious ritual. At the same time, it is clear that the meaning assigned to the Jewish state is dynamic and differs dramatically across groups. This dissent provides the basis for a struggle between cultures, often defined in terms of religious versus secular, primordial versus civil, Jewishness versus "Israeliness", or *Eretz Israel* versus the state of Israel⁷⁹².

The overlap between the internal and external dimension started in 1967 and became more evident in 1996. The Six Days War can, indeed, be considered the very moment in which religion has become closely intertwined with nationalism, when religious authorities provided legitimization for keeping the territories taken in the war of that year, strengthening the link between the people, their history, God, and the land. The term *hardal* (mustard), an acronym for *haredi* and *dati-leumi* (national religious) captures this process within the religious sector, whereby nationalist religious Jews grew closer to the *haredim* in their religious observance, and the non-Zionist ultra-Orthodox community became more nationalistic regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the Israeli case, the power of significant political issues to guide Israeli voting preferences has increased over time, even if the importance of socio-demographics (and of socio-demographic and attitudinal variables in combination) has not declined. We suggest that the source of this pattern lies in the identity dilemmas raised by the issues and their interrelationship with group characteristics: this is most evident regarding two issue variables, the territories and state-religion relations. The territorial debate was clearly dominant growing in importance from the 1984 election onward, the point at which the territory issue emerged as the overriding dimension, ordering the party system; the effect of the territories issue on the vote remained very high, in terms of distinguishing both Left from Right and Labor from *Likud* adherents.

Issues and social group allegiances reinforced existing social cleavage structures and taking them into account help us understanding the dynamics of Israeli politics as well as the causes of *Mifletet Ha'Avoda's* electoral defeat and its general political decline.

Over time, Labor identified itself as the territories-for-peace party, and its platforms became less ambiguous on this issue. The public perception of the difference between Labor and *Likud* on the territories issue did not change much; almost two-thirds of the respondents in the 1981, 1984, and 1992 surveys thought these differences were large or very large. By 1996 the figure had jumped to 80%, although the campaign rhetoric of both parties stressed a center position.

⁷⁹² Kimmerling B., *Between the Primordial and Civil Definitions of the Collective Identity: Eretz Yisrael or the State of Israel*, in Cohen E., Lissak M. and Almagor U., *The PLO and Israel: From Armed Conflict to Political Settlement*, St. Martin's Press, 1986, pp. 262-283.

Both 1992 and 1996 differed from previous elections in that many more voters said that the territories would be an important consideration in their voting decision. In the 1996 sample, 71% claimed that this issue would greatly influence their vote, compared with 52% in 1992 and less than one-third in previous elections. Summing the two categories of response, 90% in 1996 and 81% in 1992 saying that the territories issue "will influence my vote" or "will greatly influence my vote," they consisted in less than two-thirds in previous elections.

6.3 Netanyahu's premiership and the coming back of Revisionist Ideology

The dualist nature of Israeli collective identity and the Israeli polity mean that elections do not cause simply the change of a ruling party with another one, rather, they bring about a change of social order considered a *mahapach*⁷⁹³; along with this interpretation we can understand how electoral campaigns become part of an ongoing cultural clash into Israeli society: «The election and the electoral campaign widened the cleavages and reinforced the divide boundaries on two interrelated levels: between the civil-primordial identities and between the diverse subcultures of an immigrant-settler society⁷⁹⁴» but are, at the same time, the strongest cult of solidarity for the Israeli state and its civil religion.

This is also the meaning of the ascendance to power of Benjamin Netanyahu⁷⁹⁵ in 1996. It meant a break with the pragmatism which had characterized the Labor approach towards the Arab world and, in particular the Palestinians. It was a new success for the hard-line policy which derived from Revisionist Zionism, indeed, when he was elected in 1993 as the leader of the party, Netanyahu also wrote a book "A Place among nations: Israel and the world", inspired by the teachings of Jabotinsky⁷⁹⁶ and Benzion Netanyahu⁷⁹⁷, Benjamin's father. Basically, in this work he claimed the

⁷⁹³ Horowitz D., *More than a change in government*, The Jerusalem Quarterly, n.5, 1977, pp. 3-20.

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p.42.

⁷⁹⁵ He is currently the Prime Minister of Israel. Netanyahu (born October 21st 1949) was born in Tel Aviv, grew up in Jerusalem and spent his adolescent years in the United States, where his father - a noted historian - taught Jewish history in Philadelphia. In 1967, at the age of 18, Netanyahu returned to Israel to fulfill his military obligations in the Israel Defense Forces and volunteered for an elite commando unit. Following his discharge, Netanyahu studied at MIT and Harvard University. In 1982, Netanyahu joined Israel's diplomatic mission in the United States - serving for two years as Deputy Chief of Mission under then-Ambassador Moshe Arens. After returning to Israel in 1988, Netanyahu entered the political arena and was elected a Member of Knesset for the *Likud*, becoming in few years one of its main leader.

⁷⁹⁶ Chapter 7 of this book is entitled, "The Wall" alluding to the famous Jabotinsky's article of 1923.

⁷⁹⁷ Benzion Netanyahu (born Benzion Mileikowsky, March 25th 1910; died April 30th 2012) was born in Warsaw and he emigrated with his family to pre-state Israel in 1920. He was a student of the Hebrew University, where he specialized in history. In the late 1930's, after having become active in the Revisionist

world's general hostility towards the State of Israel, considering the relationships with the Arab world as a long-lasting conflict, showing his personal and negative image of Arab people: «Violence is omnipresent in the political life of all Arab countries. It is the first method to deal with domestic and foreign opponents, Arabs and non-Arabs⁷⁹⁸». But, much of his vehemence was directed against the Palestinians, basically undermining their national claims, arguing that this issue was not the core of Middle Eastern conflict, but rather the internal rivalry between the Arab peoples which artificially created it. He therefore excluded any compromise with PLO: «Regarding PLO is different. It is constitutionally linked to the idea of Israel's destruction. Take off this idea and you will not have PLO anymore⁷⁹⁹».

When the Oslo Agreement was signed, Netanyahu was relentless in condemning it, even if Israelis were inclined in supporting the peace process with the Palestinians⁸⁰⁰, but during the 1996 electoral campaign, he began to indulge on public opinion's mood, accepting the Oslo Accords but making Israelis understand that, in case of victory, he would have frozen the negotiations. He wanted to underline that the true difference between him and Labor leaders relied in the fact that they brought peace without security, while he would have assured peace and security.

Netanyahu was the youngest Prime Minister in Israeli history and was head of a very heterogeneous coalition; in addition to *Likud* and *Mafdal*, clearly in favor of *Eretz Yisrael* vision, there were also the religious parties (like for example *Shas* of *United Torah Judaism*) concerned primarily in obtaining funds in support of their voters and without a clear position on the territories. There were finally two new parties: *Derech Ha'shlisheit* made up of deputies who had left *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* in opposition to the possible withdrawal from the Golan Heights and *Yisrael Ba'Aliyah*, who collected the votes of Russian Jews.

While the new premier gave birth to its majority, *Likud* was formulating the guidelines of the new government which if on the one side it was generously promising to extend the scope of peace talks to all the neighboring countries, the document established a series of who were hopelessly against the process of peace, such as: «The government's opposition to the emergence of an independent Palestinian state and the adoption of initiatives to consolidate and develop settlement activities, the declaration of Jerusalem as indivisible and Israel's capital [...]remaining forever under Israeli sovereignty⁸⁰¹».

Zionist circles and befriending the father of the movement, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Benzion moved to New York to become Jabotinsky's personal secretary.

⁷⁹⁸ Netanyahu B., *A Place among Nations. Israel and the World*, Bantam Books, pp. 102-103.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.232.

⁸⁰⁰ *The Peace Index: 1996*, March-April-May 1996, The Israeli Democracy Institute (<http://www.peaceindex.org>).

⁸⁰¹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Guidelines of the Government of Israel - 17 June 1996*, Israel's Foreign Relations, Vol. 16: 1996-1997, n. 3.

Those premises were reaffirmed during his inaugural address to the *Knesset*, the PM promised that his government would lead to a national revival in Israel and would resume talks on permanent status, claiming the fulfillment of all the obligations assumed by the Palestinian National Authority, particularly in cooperation with Israel in order to contain terrorism⁸⁰².

Shimon Peres, as leader of the opposition, replied to Netanyahu's words: «Time is not neutral. Time has a critical importance [...]», then looking at Netanyahu said: «My friend, Prime Minister, I'm afraid you will soon find out that the electoral program with which you have been elected can't work as a recipe for progress in the peace process. You will have to disappoint many of your voters and your partners if you ever want to achieve some results. Attractive slogans can't replace good policies and coalition formulas will not eliminate the need to take bold decisions and difficult choices⁸⁰³».

During the early months of his government, Netanyahu did not show signs of his much-claimed flexibility regarding the Arab question, nor did he demonstrate his willingness to continue the talks with the Palestinians and whether this meant that Israel should continue with the policy of the iron wall, he replied: «Until new order, we are in a Middle East made of iron walls. The iron walls give us time. Hope is that, during time these walls will be abated, this process is gradually taking place. This process is gradually taking place but, in order to complete it we have to build in the Arab World the irreversible consciousness that we won't disappear⁸⁰⁴».

Netanyahu therefore accused the Labor government of having taken political and military risks while allowing the decline of national power and territorial reduction; he wanted to change this trend: «We must realize that peace treaties help security but they can't work as surrogates of deterrence. The opposite is true. Military power is a condition for peace⁸⁰⁵».

Netanyahu's intention was to shift the focus of attention from peace talks on Israel's security, rather than on the "land for peace" approach, which was the central idea of Labor government; his first target were the Oslo accords which, sooner or later, would have imposed to Israel the acceptance of an independent Palestinian state, were taking that direction. By clarifying its firm opposition to Palestinian independence, he removed the pivot around which the peace process was built.

From his point of view, Labor predecessors conceded too much initiative to the Arab side and now he was to regain the power lost, the main points of his strategy were to reduce Palestinian expectations, to weaken Arafat and the Palestinian National Authority, to suspend further implementations of the Oslo Accords and to use the security conditions set out in the agreements to

⁸⁰² Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Address in the Knesset by Prime Minister-elect Netanyahu presenting his government* - 18 June 1996, Israel's Foreign Relations, Vol. 16: 1996-1997, n. 4.

⁸⁰³ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p. 622.

⁸⁰⁴ Shavit A., *A New Middle East? What an Amusing Idea*, *Ha'aretz*, September 26th 1997.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibidem*

re-affirm Israel's dominant position. The prime minister believed that his uncompromising position would have forced the Arabs to come to further compromises.

6.3.1 The stalemate of the peace process

During his first one-hundred days in power, Netanyahu clashed with most of the people around him, including his government allies, but the substantial divide was between him and the members of Israel's security services who advised him not to stop the implementations of the duties undertaken with the Oslo Accords, but the Prime Minister was very determined pursuing his idea, in the attempt to slow down or to interrupt the peace process⁸⁰⁶. In this context Palestinian living conditions deteriorated progressively and hopes for a better future faded away, overwhelmed by Palestinian dissatisfaction.

The spark which ignited the clashes was provided by Netanyahu, with the order given the night of September 24th 1996, to open an archaeological tunnel under the *al-Aqsa* mosque⁸⁰⁷ in the Old City of Jerusalem⁸⁰⁸; the specific purpose of the tunnel was to make it easier for the tourists going through the famous archaeological site.

A new passage was opened through the Western Wall, at the basis of the sacred Muslim site, the Dome of the Rock, situated on the top of Temple Mount, it was considered by Palestinians a symbolic psychological provocation and, in this way, the Prime Minister swept away the latest hopes for a peaceful dialogue⁸⁰⁹. The action violently triggered Palestinian wrath and the Israeli public was shocked in front of the scenes of Palestinian policemen opening the fire on the Israeli counterpart, however most observers knew that Netanyahu's policy aimed to bury the peace process. Conversely to Netanyahu's intentions, the Arab and American reactions to the tunnel uprising forced him to make concessions to Palestinians on another major front in the West Bank

⁸⁰⁶ There was no Israeli evacuation from Hebron, any opening of a "safe passage" from Gaza to the West Bank and no discussion on the further withdrawal from the West Bank, whom Israel had committed itself to

⁸⁰⁷ Located inside the *Haram al-Sharif* (the noble sanctuary), placed at the top of the complex known as Mount Temple.

⁸⁰⁸ The tunnel is a passage used by the Hasmoneans in the II century BC. to bring water to the Jewish temple. Today, this tunnel is underground, completely covered by the present Old City of Jerusalem.

⁸⁰⁹ The Rabin's government had to give up to this project several times, due to the fears that such an initiative would have been taken as a provocation. Moreover, the Muslim community accused the Israeli government to pursue this intervention in order to undermine the foundations of *al-Aqsa* and of the Dome of the Rock, paving the way for the reconstruction of the temple (even though the tunnel doesn't pass under Temple Mount but runs along it).

dispute: Hebron⁸¹⁰. This city, indeed, had always had an important meaning for both the Jewish and Muslim communities due to the presence of *Ibrahimi* Mosque, originally an Herodian Synagogue which guarded the tombs of the Patriarchs, venerated by Judaism and Islam.

The two sides spent three months and half to reach a common point and the process was interesting for both the active role the US mediation and because for the first time a *Likud* government was engaged in negotiations with the Palestinians on the basis of the DOP and of the interim agreement. The Hebron Protocol was signed on January 5th 1997.

It was a milestone in the Middle East peace process, the first agreement signed by the *Likud* with the Palestinians; the protocol divided Hebron into two areas that would be governed by various security arrangements: the Palestinian area (H1) comprised 80% of the city, while the Jewish area (H2) corresponding to the remaining 20%, including the settlements of Ben Hadassa, Tel Rumeida and half of the Tomb of the Patriarchs (*Me'arat haMakhpela*) inside the present *Ibrahimi* Mosque⁸¹¹. Furthermore, an agreement for joint patrols carried out by Israeli and Palestinian units was established, as well with the entrance of 400 Palestinian police officers in the Arab side of Hebron. Palestinian critics noticed that this formula of coexistence allowed 450 colonists who constituted 0.3% of the population the best 20% of the city's commercial center, while 160,000 Palestinians went to 80% of the territory subject however to numerous restrictions and limitations.

The Hebron Protocol was presented to the Israeli Cabinet on January 14; the meeting was marked by strong tensions and lasted for 13 hours but, at the end, the ministers approved the agreement by a majority of 11 to 7⁸¹². In order to secure the majority, the Prime Minister had to implicitly threaten that if the protocol was rejected he would have no choice but to dissolve the coalition and form a national unity government with Labor. This perspective was not favorable to the small far-right religious parties which, in this case, would be relegated to the opposition⁸¹³.

On January 16th Netanyahu made a statement in front of the *Knesset* about the Hebron protocol, assuring that Israel was not abandoning Hebron, stating that this agreement allowed better conditions for Israel because it provided a far more convenient time frame, with increased freedom of action. In short, said the Prime Minister, the Hebron Protocol gave Israel peace and security. At the end of the debate, lasted for 11 hours, the parliament approved the protocol with 87 votes against

⁸¹⁰ In September 1995, the Labor government had reached an agreement on the reorganization of the city but it was suspended six months later due to terrorist attacks. After his electoral victory, Netanyahu tried to deal with the Hebron issue, treating it as a completely separate question from the Oslo process.

⁸¹¹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron- 17 January 1997*, Israel's Foreign Relations, Vol. 16: 1996-1997, n.72.

⁸¹² Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Cabinet communique on the Hebron Protocol-15 January 1997*, Israel's Foreign Relations, Vol. 16: 1996-1997, n.71.

⁸¹³ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op. cit., p.799.

17 rejections and 15 extensions. The majority of the opponents belonged to the ruling coalition and many supporters came from the opposition group; the *Knesset*'s vote reflected the broad national consensus to the continuation of the peace process.

6.3.2 The *Likud* government between settlements and terror attacks

Netanyahu, forced to adopt a relatively conciliatory line regarding the Hebron issue, found himself alienated by many of his supporters, decided to adopt a hard line on the Jerusalem issue, therefore he solemnly promised to strengthen Israel's control over the city and its surroundings by avoiding any compromise. he knew that no Palestinian would have accepted less than a strong and shared sovereignty. Accordingly to this approach, on 19 February, a project was approved for the construction of 6500 residential units for 30,000 Israelis in Har Homa⁸¹⁴, near Jerusalem⁸¹⁵; by mid-March the Prime Minister declared: «The battle for Jerusalem has begun⁸¹⁶».

On the internal side, the Labor camp took distance from the government and criticized it bitterly for having failed to reach both peace and security. At the annual meeting held in May 1997, *Miflet Ha'Avoda* adopted a resolution in order to cancel from the electoral platform of the party's, the anachronistic statement opposing to the establishment of a Palestinian state: the new policy was not in favor of the establishment of a Palestinian state, but it simply recognized the right to independence as complementary to the right of self-determination⁸¹⁷. Opinion polls showed that the majority of Israelis was accepting the emergence of an independent Palestinian state as an inevitable result of the Oslo process.

In the attempt to get rid of Labor opposition, Netanyahu presented to the Cabinet a program that would have allocated 40% of the West Bank to the Palestinian. The Prime Minister did not provide his proposal with a detailed map, but pointed out the areas that would have remained under Israeli sovereignty: the broaden Jerusalem, the Jordanian valley, the densely-colonized areas near the 1967 borders and roads for water resources; Netanyahu called this project "Allon plus⁸¹⁸", hoping to win the support of left-wing supporters. His plan was therefore directed more to the Israeli public than

⁸¹⁴ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Ministerial committee decision on building in Har Homa - 26 February 1997*, Israel's Foreign Relations, Vol. 16: 1996-1997, n.87.

⁸¹⁵ More precisely, it is located in the Southern part of the city, right in front of the Palestinian village of Beit Sahour. Such settlement officially is inside the Jerusalem municipal district, as unilaterally declared by Israel in 1967.

⁸¹⁶ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p. 629.

⁸¹⁷ The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, *The Sixth Conference of the Party, First Session [Session A] Protocol. Draft* (heb.), Section: Archives of organizations and institutions. *Mapai - Labor Party*, 14/05/1997-31/12/1997, 2-021-1997-190b (Volume II, A meeting on May 5th 1997), pp. 28-36.

⁸¹⁸ *Ha'aretz*, May 29th-30th and June 5 1997.

to the Palestinians, indeed there were no chances that they would accept the offer, due to the fact that within the framework of Oslo II Transitional Agreement, they expected to receive the 90% of the West Bank.

If his policies seemed to theoretically conform to Oslo's formula, on the ground they had the opposite effect: while the Palestinians were obtaining less lands, Israelis were receiving less peace. Indeed, the sale of new houses supported by government incentives, increased by more than 50% in the first seven months of 1997, 1.560 homes were sold and the Jewish population of the West Bank and of the Gaza Strip reached 161.157 units.

It is not by chance if *Hamas* decided to spoil this situation coming back in that precise moment with two suicide attacks in Jerusalem on July 30th and September 4th. The PM ascribed the responsibility to the Palestinian Authority, blaming it of not being able to handle the terrorist attacks that originated in areas under its control; the government therefore called for mass arrests of *Hamas* activists and declared that Israel would not concede any territory to the Palestinian Authority, if they had been used as a basis for launching terrorist attacks.

Giving too much importance to *Hamas*, Netanyahu ended up to elevate it to a prime position giving it indirect negotiating power. But, besides terrorist attacks, the other biggest obstacle to the resumption of the peace dialogue was the policy followed by the *Likud* government to provide complete political and financial support to the expansion of Jewish settlements in Palestinian territory beyond the Green Line.

This behavior was criticized not only by Palestinians, afraid that the new settlements were implying annexation of the land undermining their claims to a national homeland, but also from 1.500 officers of the Israeli army and police forces who appealed to the Prime Minister to abandon his expansion policy in Palestinian areas and to choose peace. The letter said: «A government that prefers keeping settlements beyond the Green Line, rather than resolving the historic conflict and establishing normal relations in our region, will oblige us to ask ourselves how our path is right and just⁸¹⁹»:

The lack of trust between the Palestinian Authority and the *Likud* government had made the Oslo process impracticable; it began to collapse under the heavy pressure exerted by Netanyahu's government. Any Israeli concession, albeit minimal, was made only after exhausting negotiations and, in the absence of progress, Arafat began to threaten to unilaterally declare Palestinian independence by the pre-established date. Only US President Bill Clinton's intervention succeeded in mediating an historic agreement: Wye Plantation Memorandum, signed in Washington on October 23rd 1998.

The agreement promised to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process begun in Oslo and to lead to general negotiations that would bring about a definitive peace. Israel therefore pledged to withdraw its troops in three phases and to transfer another 13% of the West Bank territory, giving

⁸¹⁹ Shlaim A., *Il Muro...*, op.cit., p. 635.

the Palestinian Authority total or partial control over 40% of the territory. In return, the Palestinians accepted a detailed work plan structured in collaboration with C.I.A. to capture and arrest *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad extremists.

Back at home, the Prime Minister should have transformed the achievement of the memorandum into a political success; the challenge was hard because, although a survey by *Yediot Aharonot* daily newspaper showed that 74% of Israelis agreed to the agreement, Netanyahu had to face with the harsh opposition coming, not from *Mifletet Ha'Avoda*, as well as from his own coalition partners, in particular by national-religious parties., Netanyahu was not able to persuade neither the right nor the left, losing the confidence of both political camps them; the nationalist parties thought that the Palestinians would have achieved somehow to obtain the territories, while the leftist group expected some pretext by the Prime Minister in order to derail again the peace process.

On November 11, the Cabinet reluctantly approved the deal based on the transfer of land in exchange for security, but the approval came after a stormy debate that lasted seven hours and after Netanyahu's consensus on the beginning of the construction of Har Homa; this was the price to pay to persuade the right-wing's parties in the coalition.

Also the *Knesset* approved the Wye River agreement on November 15th with 75 votes in favor, 19 against and 9 abstentions; the vote revealed a broad national consensus in favor of the continuation of the Oslo process. As a result, from his dependence from smaller parties,

Netanyahu tried to rescue his government by moving to the right and emptying to void any significance the agreement he had just signed. On December 20th the Israeli government decided to suspend the implementation⁸²⁰ of the second withdrawal provided for in the memorandum⁸²¹, until the Palestinian Authority had met a list of five conditions⁸²². But

despite this extreme rescue attempt, the reality was that Netanyahu's position was untenable: among his coalition there was no majority neither to apply not to dismiss Wye memorandum⁸²³ and on December 23, his government crumbled when the *Knesset* decided with 80 votes in favor and 30 opposing to go towards new elections; Netanyahu had lost the trust of his *Likud* colleagues, of his coalition partners, of the Israeli public opinion and of the Palestinian Authority.

⁸²⁰ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Cabinet communique - 20 December 1998*, Israel's Foreign Relations, Vol. 17: 1998-1999, n.127.

⁸²¹ This transfer was involving the 5% of West Bank territory, going from an exclusive Israeli control, to a co-joint supervision with the Palestinian National Authority.

⁸²² Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Israel's position on the Wye Memorandum - 22 December 1998*, Israel's Foreign Relations, Vol. 17: 1998-1999, n.128.

⁸²³ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p. 804.

6.4 Barak and a new chance for *Mifleget Ha'Avoda*

With the collapse of Israel's government in December 1998, the *Knesset* called for national elections to be held in 1999, more than a year ahead of schedule. According to the electoral law introduced in 1992, voters would, for the second time, be allowed to cast two separate votes, one for Prime Minister and a second for a political party or *Knesset* list.

The general elections that took place on May 17, 1999 were very harsh and the five-month election campaign showed the profound internal divisions of the country and the growing hostility between secular and religious, Jews and Arabs, *Sephardim* and *Askenazim*. The electoral turnout was considered crucial for the future formation of a divided Israeli society and its relationship with the Arab neighbors.

6.4.1 Ehud Barak and the creation of *Yisrael Ahad*

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Peres' failure to win elections more than once and, especially, in 1996 after Rabin's murder, brought to a change of the Labor candidate. The primaries of the party, held on June 3rd 1997, included four candidates: Ehud Barak, Efraim Sneh⁸²⁴, Yossi Beilin and Shlomo Ben-Ami. Barak received the 50,3% of the 114.000 votes casted by the party's members who participated to the elections, becoming the candidate in the race for premiership. He had at the same time a very tough approach, concerning security issues and a centrist political perspective; moreover, his military background (he was Chief of Staff, *Rav Aluf* and served in the *Sayeret Matkal*⁸²⁵) gave him the reputation of the most decorated soldier of the country, a hero who had participated in some of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) most dangerous missions.

Soon after his 1995 retirement as IDF chief-of-staff, Barak was recruited by Prime Minister Rabin as Minister of Interior⁸²⁶, his first step in order to gain credibility for the role of national leader, a man who wouldn't sacrifice the country⁸²⁷. In this perspective, he was presented as the heir of Rabin, a

⁸²⁴ He is an Israeli politician, physician, and a retired Brigadier General in the Israel Defense Forces. He was a member of the *Knesset* for the Labor Party between 1992 and 2008.

⁸²⁵ General Staff Reconnaissance Unit 269 is a special forces unit of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). First and foremost a field intelligence-gathering unit, conducting deep reconnaissance behind enemy lines to obtain strategic intelligence, *Sayeret Matkal* is also tasked with counter-terrorism and hostage rescue beyond Israel's borders.

⁸²⁶ For many observers Barak's quest for the post of Prime Minister began in this moment.

⁸²⁷ The choice to put inside the party's platform a picture of Rabin and Barak together (p.7) was thought in order to strengthen the continuity and the relationship between the two leaders, ANNEX I – *Mifleget Ha'Avoda's Political Platforms for Knesset Elections, 1, Labor Party's platform for the Fourteenth Knesset, 1999* – The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl-Israel, p. 398.

soldier who spent his life fighting against the enemies of the state and who decided to battle for peace from then on. Moreover, his victory over Yossi Beilin and Shlomo Ben-Ami confirmed the decision by the party members to adopt the “Rabin winning formula”⁸²⁸, which meant that Barak’s recent affiliation with the party was considered a further positive element, because he wasn’t too identified with the historical movement and with old-fashioned party politics.

He was a pragmatic man so he took some controversial decisions that would help him during the electoral campaign: first of all, in order to avoid intra-party tensions, he decided to offer Peres the second spot on the list without his participation to primaries; secondly, he refused a last-minute appeal from Benjamin Netanyahu in December 1998 to join with him in a national unity government (many of his colleagues doubted the decision of early elections for fear of a defeat)⁸²⁹ and after his nomination as party’s leader, he took the decision to build a new organization which would be more appropriate to the new politics, instead of relying on the party apparatus.

Therefore, he distanced himself by the symbols of Labor and created a new framework which could not be perceived as belonging to the old patterns⁸³⁰. Barak also sought to build alliances with parties representing groups who traditionally support the right; the combination of all these variables brought to the foundation of *Yisrael Ahad* (One Israel). The new formation was an electoral front composed by three parties: *Mifletet Ha’Avoda*, *Gesher*⁸³¹ and *Meimad*⁸³². The presence of each of these parties, representatives of those groups which were considered politically distant from *Ha’Avoda*, was of fundamental symbolic importance for Barak because they contributed to give a new image to Labor Party. *Gesher* was led by David Levy, a *Sephardi* politician and *Meimad* was a religious party with moderate views in foreign policy.

Given the alienation of *Mizrachi* and the segment of Israeli population more attached to religious values, *Ha’Avoda*’s objective to include these two groups was fundamental in order to soften this

⁸²⁸ Goldberg G., *The Israeli Left in the 1999 Elections*, Israel Affairs, 2000 p.24.

⁸²⁹ Doron G., *Barak, one-One Israel, Zero, or, How Labor Won the Prime Ministerial Race and Lost the Knesset Elections*, in Asher A and Michal S., *Elections in Israel 1999*, SUNY Press, 1999.

⁸³⁰ For example, he decided against appointing Peres as the president of the new party.

⁸³¹ Established in 1996, *Gesher* (bridge) formed as a break-away from the *Likud*. David Levy, *Gesher*’s founder, was protesting against Netanyahu’s refusal to integrate *Sephardim* into the upper echelon of the party.

⁸³² Established in 1988 as a religious Zionist alternative to the *Mafdal*, *Meimad* (Dimensions - Movements of the Religious Center) was discouraged by the NRP’s increasingly right-wing positions on the peace process and security matters. *Meimad* maintains that peace between Israelis and Arabs is possible and that Israel can negotiate land for peace because of the concept of *pikuach nefesh*, which states that saving a soul is more important.

antagonism. To penetrate these groups a long-term strategy⁸³³ was needed and, as part of this approach, was the emblematic apology Barak made in the name of the party, asking *Mizrachi* forgiveness for the mistreatment received by Labor Party (at that time *Mapai*) when they arrived in Israel during the 1950's. This controversial act was effective in opening up this sector to Barak's social programs.

With the Russians he used a different strategy, continuously communicated to their sophisticated network (Russian radio, television and newspaper), focusing mainly on his military background and his pragmatic attitude (for example, he also translated his biography into Russian). From these maneuvers, we can understand how the main achievement of "One Israel" was to provide Israeli voters with a more inclusive concept of *Mifleget Ha'Avoda*, in contrast with the traditional elitism that had characterized the Labor camp for decades⁸³⁴.

6.4.2 Electoral strategies

In accordance with the new electoral system, the highest priority in the campaign was given again to the election of the PM, while the elections for the *Knesset* were consciously ignored (like in 1996). In the context of a two-competitors race, median strategy could assure victory, regardless the distribution of voters' preferences and, in order to obtain this position Barak held a similar position to that of Netanyahu on security dimension. From this point of view the Labor leader had only to emphasize his personal attributes, his military experience, in order to appear as the best negotiator for Israel's security⁸³⁵.

Of course, no sign of ideology appeared in One Israel's platform, rather it was characterized by ambiguity, particularly concerning security and foreign policy issues. The document stated that:

⁸³³ Yaron Tzemach, *Plan of Action to Bring Labor Back to Competition in the Battle Field Over Mizrahi Public Opinion*, Segev Yaron Strategies, 1998.

⁸³⁴ In the attempt to offer a new image of the party, more transparent for the electorate, Labor's platform is addressed directly to Israelis, with Ehud Barak speaking to them, saying: «Citizens of Israel, I ask for your trust, so in this way we can build together a State of Israel with a better future. I believe in the State of Israel, I believe in the citizens of the State of Israel», (p.4), ANNEX I – *Mifleget Ha'Avoda's Political Platforms for Knesset Elections*, 1, *Labor Party's platform for the Fourteenth ...*, op. cit., p. 395.

⁸³⁵ The presidential tone of the electoral campaign, strongly centered on the contest between the two candidates, is well shown in the choices made by Labor to put an intense close-up of Ehud Barak at the very beginning of their platform. The document goes on with an introduction signed by the candidate himself and the entire program is really strongly centered around his person, with the recurrence of his pictures), ANNEX I – *Mifleget Ha'Avoda's Political Platforms for Knesset Elections*, 1, *Labor Party's platform for the Fourteenth ...*, op. cit., pp. 392, 394-395.

«We will keep Jerusalem United forever. We will never agree to return back to the 1967 borders⁸³⁶», these statements could have been adopted by almost any party in the Israeli political arena. *Meretz* avoid to make the same mistake of the previously election: supporting Peres publicly, harming Labor's attempt to move towards the center; this time *Meretz* did not identify too much with Barak, enabling him to achieve the positional goal.

This move to the center was attempted by both candidates, in this case we will focus on Labor's party platform in order to understand how Barak set the entire political agenda. With Barak's military career and his reputation as a skeptic in the Oslo proceedings he seemed to differ little from Netanyahu on security, giving great importance to the containment of terror attacks. Rather than challenging the premier on these issues, he indicated that his military background made him a more effective guarantor of Israel's security, thus on many occasions political observers had commented in the media that Barak is "Bibi's Compatible⁸³⁷", to indicate that there is really no difference between the two.

By the way, Barak attempted to bolster his campaign and to differentiate from his adversary, promising the withdrawal the IDF from the "security zone" in south Lebanon and to sign final status agreements with the Palestinians which, for the first time in the country's history⁸³⁸, would have been the subject of a referendum⁸³⁹. However, these agreements would be circumscribed by four red lines: Jerusalem was to remain Israel's "united, eternal capital"; no return to the 1967 borders; no Palestinian refugees⁸⁴⁰.

Barak was also able to address national concerns about the state of the economy, including the relatively unemployment rate and stagnation of the economy, albeit on the rhetorical level only. He decided to develop the social dimension because many of *Likud*'s voters were susceptible to policies that promised to improve their economic well-being. Conversely, the sole issue which was presented in a militant way was the enlistment of ultra-Orthodox citizens in the army, calling for the immediate change of the unjust situation in which the *Haredi* public does not serve in the army, while receiving mass funding from the state.

⁸³⁶ The Moshe Sharett Labor Party Archives, *Labor Party platform for the 15th Knesset – 1999*, (<http://www.archavoda.org.il/AvodaArch/matza/index.asp>).

⁸³⁷ Doron G. and Peretz D., *Sectarian Politics and...*, op. cit., p.263.

⁸³⁸ Jerusalem Post North America, n. 2007, April 23rd 1999, p. 4.

⁸³⁹ See the party's program at p.8, in ANNEX I – *Mifleget Ha'Avoda's Political Platforms for Knesset Elections*, 1, *Labor Party's platform for the Fourteenth ...*, op. cit., p. 399.

⁸⁴⁰ Consult the section "Shalom veBitachon" (pp. 6-8) in *Ha'Avoda's electoral program*), ANNEX I – *Mifleget Ha'Avoda's Political Platforms for Knesset Elections*, 1, *Labor Party's platform for the Fourteenth ...*, op. cit., pp. 397-399.

His major tactic was to win over a small sector of the political right and the “undecided” among Israeli voters. These included a substantial number of Oriental Jews, who traditionally supported *Likud*, the new Russian immigrants, who backed Netanyahu in 1996, and moderate, religious Orthodox Jews. To attain their support Barak had to present himself as neither hawk nor dove, but a centrist on the vital security dimension. For this reason, the ideological differences were not object of the campaigns; this was due to the new electoral system which required the candidates for premiership to conquer the center voters and to the fact that most Israelis were accepting the land for peace formula (although some differences regarding the land that should be given up). Rather than be focused on issues, the electoral campaign was about only one topic: Netanyahu’s performance as a premier. The main issue became “to bring Netanyahu down”⁸⁴¹.

Netanyahu’s main strategy was to emphasize his success in preventing the terror attacks of the Rabin-Peres period and in holding Palestinians accountable for alleged violations of the Oslo Accords. In this context, he tried to identify Barak as and his possible administration with sift policies of the 1992 Labor government⁸⁴². Moreover, the campaign used the slogan “A strong Leader for the Future of Israel”, sending the message that he was the only one able to defend Jerusalem, basically it was a variation on the Peace and Security slogan that brought him to power in 1996. To counter Netanyahu’s accusations that he would be soft on terror and compromise Israel’s security in negotiations with Palestinians, Barak gave main importance to his military career⁸⁴³.

As election day approached and support of Barak grew, Netanyahu became more desperate and *Likud* video propaganda played scenes of suicide bombing attacks in Israeli streets, blaming Labor to be too soft with terror. This appeal to such controversial argument showed how embattled Benjamin Netanyahu felt.

6.4.3 The success of Barak’s leadership in the elections

The outcome was a smashing personal victory for Barak but a major setback for One Israel as well as for Netanyahu and his *Likud* party. Barak’s 12% margin of victory over Netanyahu (the largest victory in two decades) seemed to end the political tie between the left and right political camps that had characterized Israeli politics since 1981. In the election for Prime Minister Ehud Barak received 1,791,020 votes or 56.08% while Benjamin Netanyahu captured 1,402,474 votes or

⁸⁴¹ Doron G., Barak, *One-One Israel, Zero...*, op. cit., p. 185.

⁸⁴² Elazar D. J. and Molloy B., *Introduction: Elections 1999 – The Interplay between Character, Political Culture and Centrism*, Israel Affairs, Volume 7, 2000.

⁸⁴³ For example, he appeared in uniform during commercials and he translated his military career in Russian, in order to attract Soviet immigrants.

43.2%⁸⁴⁴. In addition to capturing votes of groups that traditionally supported Labor, Barak attracted support from two of Netanyahu's power bases: *Sephardi* and new Russian immigrants disillusioned by the failure to achieve more rapid upward mobility⁸⁴⁵.

Barak won by a landslide (56% to 44%), the electoral triumph of the left was even more stunning because the Labor candidate was able to win also among Jewish voters as well as Arab electorate. But the parties of the candidates, Labor and *Likud*, won fewer seats in the *Knesset* than they had in the previous decades: even if *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* was the largest party, he lost 8 seats and could not form any coalition without involving right-wing or centrist parties.

The support of Labor declined more than 40%, however it wasn't the sole victim, also *Likud* suffered even heavier losses and barely retained its position as the second largest party (with 19 seats, compared to *Shas*' 17). The combined size of the two major parties can control only one third of *Knesset* seats.

The three components of the left (*Meretz*, Labor and Arab parties) gained an absolute majority of 61 MKs, but only 670,484 voters supported One Israel, 148,086 less than in 1999; conversely, the double electoral system was confirming a fragmentation of the *Knesset*, with a high probability of an unstable government. In that new political game, the Prime Minister was again the focus of power and policy, so concentration of power was increased but, since the premier couldn't rule without a majority, he became hostage of coalition negotiations.

Thus, those parties such as *Mifleget Ha'Avoda*, *Likud* or *Meretz*, that were representative of general interests, shared by the majority of Israelis, together combined received 65 seats in the *Knesset*. The rest of the MKs were awarded by sectarian parties. This situation, could be described as "polarized pluralism"⁸⁴⁶, whose paradoxical result is that while the two largest parties moved towards greater consensus, smaller parties found new dimension of conflict, along which they could gain electoral benefits by staking out extreme positions. Israel today is characterized by polarization along multiple dimensions⁸⁴⁷.

Coherently with the dynamics taking place, *Shas* emerged as the most successful list. It has become the fastest growing party in Israel, from four seats in 1984, six in 1988 and 1992, ten in 1996, to

⁸⁴⁴ *Ha'aretz*, May 20th 1999; NY Times, December 15th 1999; Pedahzur D., *Elections to the Fifteenth Knesset and for Prime Minister - Preliminary Analysis*, Labor Party Planning and Research Office, Tel Aviv, May 1999.

⁸⁴⁵ Barak received 5.3% more votes than Peres in 1996 among *Mizrachi electorate* and 10% more from the Russian voters.

⁸⁴⁶ It is a concept created by Giovanni Sartori and explained in his work, *European Political Parties; the Case of Polarized Pluralism*, Princeton University Press, 1966.

⁸⁴⁷ These dynamics are showed in Canetti D., Frant H.L. and Pedahzur A., *The Triumph of Polarization*, in Arian A. and Shamir M., *Elections in Israel...*, op. cit., pp. 166-174.

seventeen in 1999. The party began when a minority of Jewish *Haredim* from Morocco, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen rebelled against the *Ashkenazi* leadership of *Agudat Israel*. Since then it broadened its appeal to include not only Oriental Jews, but even some Arab and religious Russian voters as a result of its extensive network of social services, schools and appeals to the economically deprived. *Shas* replaced *Likud* as the party of the disadvantaged in many development and slum areas.

Barak's victory was possible thanks to the formation of *Yisrael Ahad*, a good campaign based mainly on his military background and an increased performance among Arab, *Sephardi* and Russian sectors of the electorate; these factors allowed him to improve the numbers of votes. As expected, Barak received more than 90% of the Arab vote, while Netanyahu, in Nazareth and Umm al-Fahm, received only 1.1%⁸⁴⁸, we can also deduce then that the Arab electorate voted for Barak, not for his policy positions, but by a desire to terminate Netanyahu's tenure. Barak was the lesser "evil" between the two candidates.

On the other hand, many Arabs could not bring themselves to support any Zionist candidate, either Barak or Netanyahu, and refrained from voting for Prime Minister while supporting one of the Arab parties for the *Knesset*; the percentage of Arab citizens who voted for Jewish parties dropped from 36% in 1966 to 30% in 1999. *Miflet Ha'Avoda*, the Zionist party that usually received the most Arab support among Jewish lists, received only 10% of the Arab vote, about half the percentage of 1996.

Despite his personal victory, Barak was faced with a conundrum identical to Netanyahu's after the latter's victory in 1996, i.e., how to establish a workable coalition choosing among a group of parties with such diverse priorities that any government would be based on a mixture of opposites.

6.4.4 A strong leader, looking for a strong government

Barak's landslide victory as PM did not assure an easy task in forming a new government. He was supported by the smallest *Knesset* delegation of any Prime Minister and one of the most factionalized party structures from which to select cabinet members. Thus, Barak faced the complex situation: the 15th *Knesset* included fifteen parties and at least seven would be needed in order to form a minimal working coalition. While Barak could have opted to form a more limited government involving "One Israel", *Meretz*, *Shinui*, the Centre Party and *Sharansky*, he decided for a wider coalition which would involve either *Likud* or *Shas*, providing the cabinet with a more solid consensus for maneuver on sensitive foreign policy issues dependent on ten Arab votes to obtain majority support on security issues, a contingency that Barak wanted to avoid.

He could form two types of coalitions: a peace-oriented government including *Meretz*, *Am Ehad*, Center, *Shinui*, the Russian and Arab parties (70 seats); or an alignment with *Likud*, Center, the

⁸⁴⁸ *Ha'aretz*, May 20th 1999.

Russians, and *Shinui* (67 MKs) focusing on domestic programs, but this combination would slow down negotiations with the Palestinians. On July 6, after six weeks of strenuous negotiations with all these factions Barak formed a seven-party coalition⁸⁴⁹ (the law allows 45 days to form a new government). It included his loyal partner in the peace process, Meretz, and NRP, United Torah Judaism, *Shas*, Center, and *Yisrael B'Aliyah* (75 seats). Four of the seven had been members of Netanyahu's government, supported most of his policies and backed him in the race for Prime Minister. At times the four had taken a more hard-line stance on peace issues than Netanyahu himself. In his peace negotiations, Barak would have to be sensitive to the preferences of these parties. For a similar reason, he wanted also to avoid the creation of the pitfalls of the Rabin-Peres government which had a narrow base and limited support among the population; thus, efforts at coalition negotiations with *Likud* and *Shas* were evident in order to forge a centrist government. In order to achieve this goal, the Prime Minister allowed *Shas* to the relinquishment by Aryeh Deri of any formal decision-making position, the denial of *Shas* ministerial control of the interior ministry and the postponement on the abolition of most military exemptions for *yeshiva* students⁸⁵⁰.

In this context we have also to say that the Arab parties were considered as a safety net for the new government, although their ten MKs spread over three parties, were not included in the government. Barak, however, sought to placate Arab feelings and the 524.000 Arab voters who overwhelmingly supported him, by assigning one leading Arab representative to the prestigious *Knesset* foreign affairs and Security Committee, in a symbolic and precedent-breaking move.

Israel is no longer a homogeneous society as it was in the first years of its existence, moreover the characteristic social and political solidarity has dissipated over the years as the traditional egalitarian ethos has been undermined by the rise of individualism. Society has divided into conflicting groups and the elections in 1999 showed political fragmentation with proliferation of parties representing this diversity of interests, and inability of any single constituency to represent Israel at large. At that time, these differences overlap with contending views on the peace process and the extent to which Israel should be committed to territorial compromise. This was Barak's domestic situation while he was starting to approach the difficult path of the negotiations with Palestinians.

⁸⁴⁹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Address in the Knesset by Prime Minister Elect Ehud Barak upon the presentation of his government-7 July 1999*, Israel's Foreign Relations, Vol. 18: 1999-2001, n 1.

⁸⁵⁰ Morris B., *Vittime...*, op.cit., p.807.

6.5 The fading of the Oslo era between Camp David's failure and the breakout of al-Aqsa Intifada

The new premier wanted immediately to reassure Arafat about his intention to going on with the implementation of the commitments undertaken by Netanyahu in Wye Plantation and that, even better, he was going to boost the entire peace process but also, that the new Israeli government would have preferred to include further withdrawals in a wider and definitive peace agreement, rather than proceeding with a fragmented and weak process. Barak's main concern was that the final result of the interim peace talks would have forced Israel to spend its negotiating cards, without obtaining a real peace accord.

This integration of the Wye memorandum and the final status negotiation was included in the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement⁸⁵¹ signed on September 4th 1999 by Barak and Arafat. The agreement was indeed an improvement over the previous one, as it was considered the beginning of intense negotiations about a definitive peace accord.

Israel agreed, in accordance with the terms of the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement, to leave to the Palestinians another area, equivalent to 6.1% of the West Bank, 341 square miles around Jericho, Ramallah and Jenin; however, from this point onwards, the constraints linked to the heterogeneous composition of Barak's government began to emerge until July 2000, when *Shas* and *Mafdal* ministers resigned as protest against the political line officially adopted by the Prime Minister for the upcoming summit of Camp David⁸⁵².

US President Bill Clinton recently announced that Barak and Arafat would meet in Camp David on July 2nd; the Israeli premier didn't arrive to the summit backed with a favorable political situation. Just before his departure, *Knesset* had expressed a motion of no confidence for his government with 54 votes in favor and 52 and against. Although the majority of MKs had welcomed the coming of new elections, the no confidence motion didn't achieve the 61 votes needed by law to overthrow the government and so Barak managed to keep the command.

Thus, the PM met with Arafat, thanks to the fundamental mediation of Washington, in order to face the main problems that divided Israelis from Palestinians, such as refugees, the status of Jerusalem, the borders of the future Palestinian and Israeli state, settlements in the West Bank and the management of water resources. On the background was the threat of Arafat, who argued that if no definitive agreement had been reached, on September 13th the Palestinian National Authority would have declared unilaterally the constitution of an independent state and, consequently, also its

⁸⁵¹ The Israeli-Palestinian conflict: an interactive Database (BETA), *Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum – 1999*, (<https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/222>).

⁸⁵² Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Briefing to the Cabinet by Prime Minister Barak, regarding Camp David Summit – 9 July 2000*, Israel's Foreign Relations, Vol. 18: 1999-2001, n 139.

boundaries. Jerusalem turned out to be a crucial deadlock and, despite Barak's decision to break an Israeli taboo by accepting the division of the city, the agreement was not reached because no meeting point was found regarding the Old City and, in particular, the complex of Mount Temple and *Haram al-Sharif*⁸⁵³; Arafat remained inflexible with his request to obtain full sovereignty on the entire Old City and on the mosques. Other disagreements came about the Palestinian demand for recognition and enforcement of the right of refugees to return to their homes⁸⁵⁴, their villages and their cities in Israel, based on UN resolution no. 194⁸⁵⁵. Finally, Arafat's refusal in front of the Israeli concession of 84/90% of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was experienced by many members of the delegations as the final blow to their commitment, surrendering to a widespread discouragement⁸⁵⁶.

Both the leaders went home empty-handed and disillusioned. A new set of contested narratives was soon created, attempting to explain what went wrong and who was to blame: according to one version, Barak's irritation was due to the Palestinian refusal of the unprecedented generous offers proposed, which Arafat rejected without counterproposals, proving he was not a serious partner for peace. According to a second account, Barak tried to sell, with the American help, an unattractive and non-negotiable deal to the Palestinians⁸⁵⁷ concessions, the most generous that the Israelis had ever done; Arafat himself defied the proposals of Israel, which in his view were only apparent and did not grant real sovereignty to the Palestinians; the Americans attributed to the Palestinian side the responsibility of suspending the talks, believing that, contrary to Barak, the counterpart had failed to offer any concession on important issues.

⁸⁵³ Amirav M., *Jerusalem Syndrome: The Palestinian-Israeli Battle for the Holy City*, Sussex Academic Press, 2009.

⁸⁵⁴ See: Lesch M. and L. S. Lustick, *Exile and Return: Predicaments of Palestinians*, University Pennsylvania, 2005 and Shikaki K., *Refugees and the Legitimacy of Palestinian-Israeli*, in *Arab-Jewish Relations from Conflict to Resolutions: Essays in Honour of prof. Moshe Ma'oz*, edPodeh E. and Kaufman A., Sussex Accademic Press, 2006.

⁸⁵⁵ United Nations Information System. The Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), 194 (III). *Palestine -- Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator*, General Assembly, A/RES/194 (III) 11 December 1948, (<https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/C758572B78D1CD0085256BCF0077E51A>).

⁸⁵⁶ For the discussion of the Camp David Summit, see Akram Hanieh, *The Camp David Papers*, *Al-Ayyam* Newspaper, 2000, Swisher C. E., *The Truth about Camp David: The Untold Story about the Collapse East Peace Process*, Nation Books, 2004 and Ross D., *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

⁸⁵⁷ Pressman J. subjects both of these dueling narratives to critical scrutiny in *Visions in Collision: What Happened at Camp David and Taba?*, *International Security*, vol.28, n. 2, Fall 2003, pp. 5-43. Rabinovich distinguishes between four narratives, the first two of which (the orthodox and the revisionist) correspond roughly with the two presented here: Rabinovich I., *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs, 1948-2003*, Princeton University Press, 2004. 160. 76.

But what was interpreted as the real Palestinian response to the peace offers made in Camp David was the breakout of a second Intifada, known as *al-Aqsa* Intifada; this name was chosen because the event that inflamed Palestinian violence, took place on September 28th 2000, after Ariel Sharon's walk on *Haram al-Sharif*; the action was seen as a provocation by the Palestinians, but also by the Muslim community which immediately reacted attacking Israeli police and throwing stones.

The day after, during the Friday prayer, other clashes took place, this time they rapidly escalated, causing the first victims; the demonstrators clashed with the Israeli policemen also in West Bank and Gaza: a new Intifada was begun, but this time it was very different from the first one due to the fact that, members of Palestinian police joined the rioters, shooting back to IDF soldiers and, with the time passing by, weapons and terror attacks would have become the main tools of the uprising, while strikes and street rallies were losing their importance.

A second paramount difference, relied in the participation of Israeli Arabs; this time 1 million people belonging to Arab minority in Israel joined the clashes on September 30th: they attacked the police with stones and molotov bombs, blocking the main roads and burning Israeli institutional headquarters in their cities. The highest participation was registered among the Arab residents in Yafo, Akko and Nazareth, besides the Galilee's Triangle⁸⁵⁸, the Israeli police reacted ineffectively, often worsening the situation killing or hurting people. Those victims will be fundamental for the definition of the relationships between Israelis Jews and Arabs in the following years. For sure, one of the reasons that brought Arab citizens to participate to the Intifada has to be traced down the long history of social marginalization experienced and also in the progressing radicalization of their political vision. Besides this, Barak's recent indifference towards this minority exacerbated the still existing tensions; after having received 95% of Arab votes during the 1999 elections, the Prime Minister didn't ask the Arab parties to join the coalition, neither consulted them on substantial governmental issues or, least of all, tried to respond to their needs and problems.

The causes of the outbreak of these disorders were deeper; even though Sharon's visit to the mosques undoubtedly constituted a provocative element that inflamed Palestinian anger, this event can't be considered the only cause of Intifada. Indeed, even if the initial momentum was spontaneous, the Palestinian leadership was driven by the desire to strengthen the position of the PNA in peace negotiations with Israel and quickly took control of the uprising⁸⁵⁹. This was the interpretation of

⁸⁵⁸ The Triangle (*HaMeshulash* in Hebrew or *al-Muthallath* in Arabic) is a concentration of Israeli Arab towns and villages adjacent to the Green Line, located in the eastern Sharon plain, among the Samarian foothills; this area is located within the easternmost boundaries of both the Central District and Haifa District (between Haifa, Nazareth and Afula).

⁸⁵⁹ For an insight of Palestinian strategy during the second *intifada*, see Ayigh Y., *Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt*, *Survival*, vol.43, n.3, Autumn 2001, pp. 47-60 and *The Palestinian Strategic Impasse*, *Survival*, vol.44, n.4, Winter 2002, pp. 7-21.

the situation given by the Israelis in the official report⁸⁶⁰ for the International Commission of Inquiry led by Senator George Mitchell⁸⁶¹; in support of this thesis, the report cited the statement by a senior Palestinian official Abu Ali Mustafa (July 23rd), shortly after the end of Camp David summit and two months before the outbreak of the Intifada: «The issues about Jerusalem, the refugees and sovereignty will be decided on the ground and not by negotiations, regarding this point it is necessary to prepare the Palestinian people for the next step [...] I think that in the future the situation will be more violent than the 1987-1993 Intifada⁸⁶²».

The most immediate effect of the Intifada's outbreak was to hurry the last and desperate attempt for a diplomatic initiative; Barak had said that Israel would not continue to negotiate peace with protracted violence on the background, but in November the Prime Minister agreed with Washington for a last attempt to resume talks; but Barak was subjected to different pressures: the clashes and terror attacks on one side and, two imminent institutional deadlines corresponding with the end of Bill Clinton's presidency (January 20 2001) and the Israeli elections scheduled on February 6th 2001.

After weeks of secret diplomatic activity, on December 23rd, Clinton's proposals⁸⁶³ were announced. The proposal included the transfer of 94-96% of the West Bank to Palestinian sovereignty and territorial compensation for Palestinians refugees, evacuation of most Israeli settlements and an international force to secure the new borders, demilitarization of the Palestinian state, division of Jerusalem on the basis of demographic and a sort of Palestinian sovereignty over Haram al-Sharif and Israeli control on the Western Wall and Jewish Holy Places; at the end of December the Israeli government officially accepted Clinton's proposals as the basis for a final agreement, Arafat responded with a "blunt rejection⁸⁶⁴".

Over the following weeks, Barak sought to reach a peace agreement in order to reduce Palestinian violence and consequently, make the Israeli public more likely to continue the negotiations; the final attempt was made in Taba from 21st to 27th January 2000, but the talks were continually undermined by the ongoing Intifada. Indeed, this meeting ended without significant progress being made, even if paradoxically the agreement had never been so close. The day after, January 28th, Barak decided to

⁸⁶⁰ The Israeli-Palestinian conflict: an interactive Database (BETA), *Mitchell Report (Sharm al-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee Final Report) - English - 2001* (http://ecf.org.il/media_items/965).

⁸⁶¹ The Mitchell Report, officially the "Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee Report" is a report that was created by an international fact-finding committee, led by former US Senator George Mitchell. The report describes possible causes of the *al-Aqsa Intifada*, and gives recommendations to end the violence, rebuild confidence and resume negotiations. It was published on April 30th 2001.

⁸⁶² *Ha'aretz*, February 1st 2000.

⁸⁶³ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Clinton Peace Plan, 21 December 2001*, Israel's Foreign Relations vol. 18: 1999-2001, n.226.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ha'aretz*, December 28th 2000.

stop any talks with the Palestinians and spend the weeks remaining in his election campaign, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process was suspended indefinitely.

Undoubtedly, the greatest consequence of the Intifada was political because it affected the government stability, accelerating Barak's coalition downfall and provoking a major ideological turmoil among Israeli left: confusion and the feeling of been betrayed by Arafat were dominant. Since 1967 what divided the Labor camp from the nationalist right was the will to reach a compromise with the Palestinians, which included territorial concessions but, in a matter of months the Palestinians rejected the concessions made. Without any other viable political alternative, the *Miflet Ha'Avoda* no longer knew what to offer to Israeli electorate voters, so on December 9th Barak announced his resignation and called for new elections for the premiership within sixty days.

Barak then had to face Ariel Sharon, leader of *Likud*; at the beginning opinion polls gave the latter a slight advantage, but then he greatly increased the gap after every new Palestinian attack (just as they contributed to Netanyahu's victory in 1996). Israeli public opinion chose Sharon, whose victory was overwhelming with 62.4% votes against Barak's 37.6%: it was the clearest electoral success in Israel's history.

6.6 Ariel Sharon and the beginning of new political dominance

After the defeat experienced by Binyamin Netanyahu against Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon was chosen by a demoralized *Likud* party as a temporary caretaker. Less than two years later, in a special election held in February 2001, Sharon defeated Barak to become Prime Minister, gaining record support exceeding 60% of the vote. Sharon proceeded to build on this foundation, forming a national unity government (NUG), and after the coalition collapsed, triggering the general elections of 2003, Sharon led the *Likud* to a sweeping victory.

The key to this startling and far-reaching change in Israeli politics is clearly to be found in the catastrophic failure of the Oslo process and the Palestinian campaign of violence that followed. Indeed, foreign policy and issues related to the last phase of the Oslo negotiations dominated Israeli politics after 1999. The prominence of the peace process in Israeli politics is hardly a new phenomenon, but there has been a fundamental change in the way the public relates to the peace process. In the wake of the Six-Day War, Israelis increasingly came to believe that they were able to shape their relations with the Arab states and the Palestinians. As a result, the ideological debate over the future of the territories became a major part of the political discourse. In contrast, in the wake of the collapse of the Oslo process, the ideological divide over the peace process has been replaced by a growing consensus, as the Israeli public no longer believes that Israel has much ability to alter the fundamental positions of the Palestinians, at least in the short term.

The results of the 2001 and 2003 elections (and the general consensus that they reflected) should not be seen as a temporary ripple, but rather as representing a transformation within Israeli politics

triggered in July 2000, following the failure of the 'permanent status' talks and the beginning of the violence that brought down the government of Ehud Barak.

As a result, by the 2003 elections, positions on these issues had already largely crystallized among the vast majority of Israeli voters. In the campaign itself, the debate on security, responses to terrorism, negotiations with the Palestinians were secondary, with little impact on the results. However, for 35–40% of the electorate, security was the key issue, as opposed to the only 6% who thought corruption was the key issue. Indeed, foreign policy and issues related to the last phase of the Oslo negotiations still dominated Israeli politics after 1999⁸⁶⁵.

As in the 2001 election for Prime Minister, the large swing away from Labor and the left towards *Likud* and its right coalition was primarily to be considered as a vote of “no confidence” towards the consideration of the Palestinians as partners for peace, especially the leader of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Yasser Arafat.

Ha'avodah's victories in 1992 and 1999 were achieved by candidates with impeccable security credentials, former chiefs of staff Rabin and Barak, and both emphasized the security benefits of their policies. Following the collapse of the peace process in 2000, the public came to believe that a government led by Sharon was most likely to generate a secure path towards peace⁸⁶⁶. Here, Sharon's success rested on the transformation of his image in the eyes of the public from “hard-liner-hawk” to a credible candidate. In addition, Sharon began to implement the popular and bi-partisan demand for the construction of a separation fence between Israel and the Palestinians.

Finally, the scale of Sharon's victory, if not the victory itself, was greatly assisted by the inability of the Israeli left to present an alternative policy that appeared viable to the majority of the public, especially centrists. Part of the problem was that the left was internally divided; with the collapse of Oslo it had no unifying theme. With a weak leadership, it was also difficult for Labor to formulate a credible alternative to *Likud*.

Over 80% of Israelis thought the Palestinians were solely (49%) or mostly (35%) responsible for the continuation of the conflict. Around 70% thought that the Palestinians in general did not want peace and that their true aim was to kill as many Jews as possible and conquer.

⁸⁶⁵ As perfectly explained in Rynhold J. and Steinberg G., *The Peace Process and the Israeli Elections*, Israel Affairs, vol.10, n. 4, Summer 2004.

⁸⁶⁶ Shavit A., *Lessons of the Blood Curve*, *Ha'aretz*, December 12th 2002.

CONCLUSIONS

Through these six chapters we have examined and analyzed the most important and transformative events of the political history of Israel, this path was essential in order to study the framework within which *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* (the Labor Party) born (as *Mapai*), developed, transformed and (as it seems until today) has declined. In order to achieve this purpose, we had to focus our analysis on specific topics that could help us catching the dynamics and variables which contributed in the long-lasting decline of Labor after 2001. These conclusions aim to highlight the remarkable facts emerged and to show the implications they have on the premises of the analysis.

We started with the birth of Zionism and the Mandate period before the foundation of the State; in this epoch the cultural, ideological and political dominance of *Mapai* (*Mifleget Ha'Avoda*'s precursor) was established thanks to two different elements: the power of the Labor Zionist ethos and the creation of a developed institutional apparatus. On one hand the values and the symbols of Zionist ideology were actualized in the *halutz*, the pioneer farmer who cultivated and defended his land, active in the construction of a Jewish national home and of a native Hebrew culture in Zion; on the other, the 1920's and the 1930's were the years where some important Jewish institutions born in the Mandate of Palestine like the Jewish Agency and the *Histadrut*, both of them were important in the eyes of the Zionist leadership for the birth of the future national state.

Histadrut in particular was the mean by which Labor Zionism, led by Ben-Gurion, was able to set up a strict relationship between the party and the population. Indeed, this organization (whose majority belonged to Ben-Gurion's ranks) providing the main basic services to the people, created a deep sense of dependence, which together with the strength of Labor ideology became also political affiliation.

In this way, when the State of Israel born in 1948, Ben-Gurion was already become naturally the leader of the Zionist enterprise and *Mapai* the dominant party of the newborn Israeli political system. The development of an ideological dominance was also due to the beginning of a process which would have led to the creation of Israeli civil religion, a group of values, myths and symbols upon which "Israeliness" would have been based on (as we have seen, one of these founding events is the 1948 war, called by Israelis *Milhamat Ha'Zmaut*, War of Independence).

With these premises, Ben-Gurion (as the Prime Minister of the State of Israel) began the nation-building venture, first of all introducing the new concept of Statism, better known as *mamlachtiut*; around these principles the policies were decided and all the efforts were directed to, in order to provide Israel with a cohesive, high mobilized population and with the resources which would have allowed its political and economic growth. In those years, the priorities of *Mapai* and its leader were mainly three: absorbing the waves of mass immigration that were arriving in Israel, creating a strong national culture and identity and stabilizing the precarious situation of the borders.

All those activities were conducted through the strict control of the party, which was able to build a strong and centralized bureaucracy (*Gush*, the party machine). In that period the leadership of the party was solidly held by Ben-Gurion, who only in 1963 decided to retire; after fifteen years the leadership of the *Mapai* changed and Levy Eshkol became Prime Minister. We have to remember that until the 1960's the party had full dominance in Israel under any point of view: cultural, ideological, institutional and political, for these reasons no other political group was able to win the elections, neither *Herut* (Menachem Begin's party, inspired by Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism) which was considered *Mapai*'s main rival.

But things were about to change indeed, notwithstanding Ben-Gurion's resignation, he still exerted strong influence on the party, especially on the young generation of *Mapai*—(including Moshe Dayan, Shimon Peres); the tensions between Eshkol and Ben-Gurion precipitated due to the Lavon Affair, which led in 1965 to the creation of a new party, *Rafi*: this was the first time *Mapai* suffered such an important crisis among its ranks but, three years later, this secession ended with the creation of the *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* (Labor Party), as the union between *Mapai*, *Ahdut Ha'Avoda* and *Rafi*. It is very important to keep in mind this period because it give us the idea of the beginning of a general crisis regarding the leadership which, after those years, never left the party and opened a new era of internal accentuated fractionalization and contest for power; with these characteristics and a brand-new composition, *Ha'Avoda* was immediately called to face one of the most demanding challenged ever faced by Israel: the Six Days War.

Besides the stunning and significant consequences both on the entire Middle East and on Israeli foreign policy, this major historical event had paramount and irreversible effects also on Israel's internal dynamics, which originated mainly by the conquest of the West Bank and the Old City of Jerusalem: reaching the most significant places for Judaism (such as the *Kotel* or the *Ma'arat Ha'Machpelahin* in Hebron) awaked strong emotions among Israelis that seemed to the buried, after the predominance of the Labor, secular vision; the fulfillment of an ancient nostalgia gave birth to longing religious feelings which had then the possibility to be granted through the control and the settlement of those territories, which were the cradle of Judaism and the origin of the Jewish people. Starting from that point a deep change in Israeli political culture took place and, during the following years, numerous groups adhering to the principles of this new “Religious Zionism” were created; this renewed type of Zionism vindicated a new ideological predominance over Labor Zionism which seemed to have run out of its initial impetus. In few years the ethos of the *halutz* started fading away and was been replaced by a type of settler who was deeply inspired by those national-religious values.

On a political level, the formation of a national unity government in 1969 in order to face the war, gave legitimization to *Gahal*, the new political formation led by Begin which was seen by Israelis as a valid alternative option to *Ha'Avoda* rule. It was an historical occasion for Revisionist Zionism

which, at the same time was discovering a kindred spirit in the new national-religious spirit diffusing on the ground.

We have to notice that until that very moment, Israeli society was culturally characterized by the attempt of realizing the melting-pot idea, a Ben-Gurion's envision according to which the creation of a common Israeli identity would be reached by the absorption of new immigrants (coming mainly from North Africa and Middle East) who would have abandoned the patterns of the culture of their countries of origins, embracing the Israeli one which was mainly based on Labor, *Ashkenazi* cultural elements. The Six Days War opened the path for the challenge to this cultural prominence and for a more definite emergence of different and strong inside Israel's society; these divides, which are still and more evident today, were mainly based on three distinctions: ethnic (*Mizrachim/Sepahrdim-Ashkenazim*, that is to say Jews with Oriental or European origins), religious (*dati'im -hilonim* religious or secular attitude towards the state) and political (*iamanim- shmolanim*, supporters of the right or left-wing parties).

Notwithstanding these new emerging trends, *Mifleget Ha'Avoda* was able to retain power also in the 1973 elections; this year could be considered as a catalyst moment for Israel's political history, not only due the Yom Kippur War itself, but mostly for its tremendous ramifications on Israeli politics and society. Indeed, the bad management of the war (*mechdal*), which saw *Tsahal* (Israeli army) suffering heavy losses, revealed *Ha'Avoda's* increasing weakness, due to the internal clashes (for example those regarding the nomination Golda Meir and then Yitzhak Rabin as Prime Minister), together with excessive degree of bureaucratization and corruption. The fact that the party demonstrated to be no longer able to satisfy Israeli main needs as it did in the previous decades, especially the demand of security and defense, opened a further breach in its image of powerful, dominant and un-challengeable party.

All the dynamics mentioned above brought to the *machapah* (revolution) of 1977 elections, when the victory of Menachem Begin's *Likud* set forth, for the first time in Israeli political history, the formation of a government led by a right-wing party. This round of voting is considered critical for the transformation of Israeli political arena because it introduced or strengthened some electoral trends which are still today fundamental in order to understand Israeli politics.

Indeed, Menachem Begin's success was possible because of his ability in intercepting the wide discontent among Israelis for Labor rule, especially the dissatisfaction coming from particular sectors of society, the *Mizrachi*, lower-income, traditionalist voters. The Oriental Jews were very resentful for the treatment *Mapai* and *Ha'Avoda* (perceived as elitist, *Ashkenazi* parties) addressed to them and *Likud* achieved to channel these feelings, together with the new national-religious feelings and to win their vote. These events gave birth to the first great overlap of two different cleavages: the identitarian/ethnic (oriental Jews) and the national-religious (political) one.

On the other hand, *Miflet Ha'Avoda* demonstrated to have lost its inefficacy to attract new immigrants but also the new young generations and, in general, the strata of population which didn't belong to its traditional constituencies of voters, that is to say *Ashkenazi*, secular, middle-class Israelis. This inability confirmed the external perception of the party, seen as representatives of strong and limited interests which didn't corresponds to the need of *Mizrachim*, youngsters and workers, who decided to cast their vote for the anti-establishment formation, symbolized by *Likud*. As emerged since 1967, Israeli society was undergoing to major changes involving their identity and their political culture: in the meanwhile, Labor Party was unable to change its structure in order to respond to these transformations, due to the internal struggle for power and to the widespread perception (also among political observers and commentators) that its national leadership could not be challenged. The final outcome was a detachment of the party platform from the demands and from the characteristics of Israeli electorate.

This need of reform accompanied *Miflet Ha'Avoda* during the years of its opposition (1977-1983) and during the 1980's; in this period Israeli political system became more and more competitive, making even more difficult for only one party to achieve the type of dominance enjoyed by *Mapai* and *Ha'Avoda* in the previous decades. This dynamic resulted with the creation of a series of national unity government, in which Labor Party was the main partner of *Likud* (1984) or, at least its major member (1988).

The elections which took place in those years were characterized by different and important elements which contributed to shape the political environment of Israel approaching the 1990's; so we have to notice that during the 1980's the main parameter guiding Israeli electoral behavior changed from 1981, when it was strongly defined the ethnic element, to 1984 and 1988, when this last element lost importance and political issues (linked to the future of territories and the peace with the Arab neighbors) began to become the main factor guiding electoral affiliation.

At this point, a further element has to be added to our analysis, the peace process. Before going on, two clarifications have to be made: first of all, as already explicated in the chapters, the evolution of the peace talks is not analyzed within the context of the negotiations per se, but contemplated only regarding its internal repercussion on Israeli politics. Secondly, this topic is introduced only at this point of these conclusions, not because it didn't have any importance in the political debate before, but because its major effects become visible and dominant in Israeli arena, at the 1990's threshold.

As we have seen, when the West Bank and Gaza were captured, this event upset Israeli perceptions of external but also internal identity and territorial borders; immediately an intense debate erupted between two different position: one more inclined towards negotiations with the Arab states regarding a territorial compromise, represented by *Miflet Ha'Avoda* and other leftist parties, while the other one totally committed to the idea of *Eretz Yisrael* (Greater Israel) and, for this reason,

supporting the holding of the conquered land (*Likud* and *Mafdal* were the leading parties). But inside each camp, the opinions were not so cohesive and defined.

Among *Ha'Avoda*'s rank, the debate over the future of the Territories was lively and characterized by different position, expressed by leading political figures, such as Yigal Allon or Moshe Dayan. But what it is important for our analysis is to clarify that, despite this diversity of attitudes, one common point was the intuition that the land could have become a mean in order to grant Israel's security: holding some of those areas for strategic reasons or negotiating them with Arab neighbors, in exchange of a peace agreement.

Only in the 1980's, after Camp David Accords signed by Menachem Begin with Egypt, the Lebanon War of 1982 perceived by Israelis as the first conflict fought "by choice" and the breakout of the first intifada, the "land for peace" approach took a prominent importance in Labor Party's platform. In particular, Shimon Peres was since the very first moment the mastermind and the major contributor to the peace process, trying to carry on negotiations with Jordan about the sovereignty over the West Bank. Until the beginning of the second half of the Eighties, the Palestinian question was still considered a complementary issue.

But something was going to change in 1987, with the breakout of the First Intifada, whose widespread and long-lasting uprising made Israelis aware of the un-sustainability of the status quo. In those years, *Miflet Ha'Avoda* was member of the government formed by *Likud* in 1988 and Yitzhak Rabin was Minister of Defense who, having to face the magnitude of the riots and their popular participation, understood that the solution to that question should have been political, while military approaches resulted totally ineffective.

As we have mentioned before, these aspects of the peace process are relevant to this research because they make us to understand some critical turning points in Israeli political history. The elections of 1992 are one of them and they are not completely clear considering these dynamics in the background of the analysis of the electoral results, indeed traditional and new elements cooperated to determine Labor's victory in that year. An old pattern presented again: *Likud*, in power since 1977, was now seen by the electorate as corrupted, ineffective and incapable of facing the new challenges posed by the recent transformation of the international arena.

As it happened in 1977, Israeli voters wanted to punish the party representing the existent establishment and this choice was made easier by the strategy adopted by *Miflet Ha'Avoda*, which was highly attractive thanks to the leadership of Yitzhak Rabin. Indeed, he was able not only to convince undecided voters, but also to persuade traditional *Likud*'s supporters among *Mizrachim* to vote for Labor. Moreover, he also adopted an interesting approach towards the peace process, underlying the economic aspect related to the conspicuous investments direct beyond the Green Line and proposing to re-direct that money inside Israeli borders for welfare services. This tactic won the support of the immigrants just arrived from Former Soviet Union.

The years under the government of Yitzhak Rabin were characterized by important achievements (the economy was getting better, the Oslo Accords were signed and Israel improved its international positions establishing relationships with foreign countries) but, at the same time, were very tough and posed Israeli society under heavy pressures. The achievement of the agreements with the Palestinian caused the explosion of the internal debate between doves (supporters of the “land for peace” approach and, in general, of the work done by Prime Minister Rabin and his Foreign Minister Peres) and hawks (against the policy of territorial compromise, adherents to the *Eretz Yisrael's* vision and loyal to Benyamin Netanyahu's right-wing coalition).

These two camps were representatives of two completely opposed visions not simply of the territorial extension of the State of Israel but also of Israeli identity, involving the way Israelis perceived themselves and, consequently, how they perceived external elements, in this case the Palestinians. This clash, this challenge for Israeli cultural dominance and identity definition culminated with the murder of Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995; that event shocked profoundly the society, giving birth to profound considerations about the meaning of democracy within a highly volatile social and political environment, as Israel is. Israelis found themselves profoundly divided and the electorate became more and more polarized, especially about the territorial-security issue.

Approaching the 1996 elections, *Miflet Ha'Avoda* was self-confident about the positive outcome of the round of voting: Shimon Peres, his candidate, became Prime Minister after Yitzhak Rabin's death and he spent all his efforts in order to implement the peace process. In front of the Israeli electorate deeply shocked by the political assassination, committed towards the legacy of former Prime Minister Rabin and pretty hostile toward the right-wing parties, the victory seemed assured. On the contrary, Benyamin Netanyahu was able to regain the lost support and to win the elections. The *Likud's* performance demonstrated that Labor' success in 1992 was due to particularly conditions and that it couldn't be interpreted as a coming back to its dominant position. Indeed, in 1996 *Miflet Ha'Avoda* 's was still in need for internal reform and its criteria adopted in order to choose its candidate and its electoral strategy were completely opposed to the 1992 ones and, most of all, they were not of the candidate and of the electoral strategy to adopt were completely unsuitable for the new Israeli political system that was then characterized by the direct election of the prime minister, which asked for strong leaders able to catch the central undecided voters.

The Labor Party seemed to have learned from its previous mistake when it decided to propose as its candidate for the electoral race Ehud Barak, a man with a moderate political attitude, but with a strong military background: *Ha'Avoda* chose to adopt again the winning “Rabin's formula”. This time the strategy worked out, thanks to some measures adopted by Ehud Barak: first of all, the decision to rename the party in the framework of an overall strategy of reform; “One Israel” met with success the electoral competition, winning thanks also to the vote of some constituencies that before that moment were considered as “electorally out of reach”, such as the *Mizrachim*, the religious or the younger generations. The general strategy of reform bore fruits and entrusted Ehud Barak with a

mandate to form the government and to proceed with the peace process and to complete the work started by Yitzhak Rabin.

The 2000 was a turning point in Israeli political history due two main events: the failure of the Camp David negotiations and the breakout of the *al-Aqsa* intifada; indeed, these two occurrences closed the era of the “land for peace” approach, started in 1992 with the election of Prime Minister Rabin. They were the demonstration, to the eyes of the Israeli public opinion, that compromise was impossible because there was nobody to talk with and, besides this, the counterparty decided to respond to the most considerable offer ever made by any other Israeli government starting a new wave of violence. From that moment on, the Israeli electorate shifted its attention from the negotiation path, considered arrived at a dead point, towards concerns about daily life security and the containment of terror attacks.

In this environment *Miflet Ha'Avoda* was destined to pay a heavy toll: its envision was in completely disarray and it wasn't able to attract anymore Israeli public, which were seeking for an alternative strategy to adopt towards Palestinians. Ariel Sharon, leader of *Likud*, was the man of the moment embodying the strong personality Israelis needed in a very hard time and, for this reason, he was chosen by the voters to lead the country, in the direct election for Prime Minister in 2001, following the resignation of Ehud Barak. This victory inaugurated a long-lasting period of political crisis experienced by Labor Party which corresponded to an apparent irreversible electoral decline.

Indeed, since 2001, *Ha'Avoda* has never won a round of voting in the last 17 years. Starting from the dynamics emerged during this analysis and summarized above, we are going to respond to the initial questions which this research relies on, specifically about the reasons of *Miflet Ha'Avoda* ongoing crisis. Our main hypothesis consisted in tracing back the causes of this decline in the period 1995-2001, corresponding to the downfall of the Oslo process and preceding the “final” defeat of Labor by Ariel Sharon. There are some causes of this process:

1. The lack of a strong leadership within the party, after the death of Yitzhak Rabin;
2. A strict connection with the Oslo process and a failing reformulation of a new approach toward the territorial and peace issues;
3. The persistence of some structural characteristics (old and new) which caused the profound detachment of the party from Israeli electorate.

With this premises in mind we can examine how the detailed study of each subject has contributed in achieving our aim.

The first point found some evidence looking to the positive performances during the Nineties (1992-1999) and to the negative ones (1996-2001); the *Miflet Ha'Avoda* tried to fill the void left by Yitzhak Rabin's death by proposing Shimon Peres, who demonstrated to be unable to “capitalize” the shock and the sorrow of the Prime Minister's murder did not win the 1996. In this precise case we notice how the main reason for this failure is to be attribute to Shimon Peres' character which never gained Israelis' trust as instead Mr. Security Yitzhak Rabin did. In 1996, Labor's rival was the *Likud* headed

by Benjamin Netanyahu, who was able to win with a narrow difference of 300.000 votes; this tight advantage was mainly justified, taking into consideration the new electoral system which introduced for the first time the direct election of the Prime Minister. Indeed, in such a competition, the role of the candidates acquired paramount importance and the electoral campaign was totally focused on this aspect, leaving on the background the contents of the political platforms.

A better attempt was made with Ehud Barak in 1999; this choice not only was more suitable in order to face the new characteristics of the political system, but also Labor's candidate had some of the elements necessary to gain the trust of the Israeli electorate.

But, besides his charisma, he was able to win because he understood the party's need for reform; the creation of One Israel in 1999 was precisely the attempt to respond to the necessity to revive the Labor Camp, as explained before. The lack of strong leadership meant also the absence of a guide that could lead the *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* through a process of renewal designed to make the party more responsive to changes and new electorate needs.

The work started by Ehud Barak was not enough and, in 2001, Ariel Sharon was able to win the race for the premiership, defeating Labor Prime Minister. It is possible to understand this victory, taking into consideration the historical context: the rise of the Second Intifada, characterized by widespread violence and numerous attacks carried out by suicide bombers, created in Israel a negative psychological atmosphere, dominated by the fear of terrorism. In such circumstances, the moderate posture proposed by *Mifletet Ha'Avoda* was perceived as completely inappropriate and useless by the majority of Israelis, who preferred the sense of security provided by the charismatic Ariel Sharon.

Since the Nineties, candidate's importance increased over time within Israeli political system (following a general political trend toward the "personalization of political power" within the international system), not only because of the demand for security due to contingencies, but also for the increasingly individualistic nature of electoral campaigns, more focused on leaders' personalities and less on ideological features.

The second statement found some correspondence in the research's development showed before, where it is possible to observe how the Arab-Israeli conflict influenced Israeli internal politics. In the context of this general trend, it was noticed how this dynamic is particularly true for the Labor Party whose performances were conditioned in particular by the evolution (or in this case the derailment) of the peace process begun with Oslo. As demonstrated by the analysis of the electoral results, the territorial and peace/security issues, especially in the period 1992-2000, became the most significant variable defining voting preferences.

An example is the negative repercussion of the terror attacks that took place during election campaigns (1996 and 2001) which discouraged Israelis to vote for the party which was fostering the peace talks. Indeed, they were detrimental for the success of the Labor/peace camp, which was highly identified with the peace process itself. With the definitive failure of the land for peace

process during the Camp David meeting in 1999 the Labor party lost the main factor which had characterized its political identity during the 1990's.

Through its electoral campaigns and electoral platforms, *Ha'Avoda* tried to propose its own guideline, consisted in the "land for peace" approach, which was unable to change and to adapt its political agenda to the mood of the Israeli public opinion, as well as to the reality of the failure of the peace process, exacerbated by the violent Second Intifada. Indeed, in 2001, Labor proposal for negotiations was considered a too moderate line by the majority of the Israeli voters.

Labor's difficulties in re-formulating an alternative approach to the "land for peace" principle can be considered a preliminary condition to Labor's imminent decline because it affected Labor's Ehud Barak's performance in 2001 and which was going to increase its weight in the following years.

The last issue was not included in the formulation of the initial hypothesis, but it came out as a strong factor determining *Miflet Ha'Avoda's* decline in the years taken into consideration. The transformations experienced by Israeli political system asked to the parties the ability to respond to these major changes. Labor Party seemed not to be able to implement the expedients necessary because until the beginning of the 2000's it maintained its complex bureaucracy and its "sectorial" social image as an *Ashkenazi*, secular, middle class party. This perception favored the alienation of specific sectors of Israeli society, especially true in the case of Orientals Jews who, together with the religious and the younger generations, had always represented for *Ha'Avoda*, difficult groups to approach during election campaign.

The same dynamic is also true for *Likud*, which has always been associated with *Mizrachi*, lower-income and more traditionalist (or religious) Jews; however, in the last decades, the party managed to conquer more easily undecided or center voters. This trend has been reinforced by dynamics emerged in Israeli political system in those years, that were: the appearance of a more "tribal" vote; even if this tendency already existed, the electoral reform introduced in 1996, gave birth to the fragmentation of the Israeli preferences among the myriad of parties representing the specific interests of the numerous identity groups present in Israeli society. While, on the other hand, it polarized the choice of Israeli electorate among the two opposing camps, represented by *Likud* and *Miflet Ha'Avoda* on paramount political issues such as peace and security.

Definitely, the years 1995-2000 were fundamental because they showed some traditional structural characteristics of the Labor Party which it was unable to overcome becoming, in this way, unable to react to the change of the electoral system; other features, such as the difficulties in setting a new political agenda, are elements which are strictly linked to the context of Israeli politics during the Nineties but which constituted new challenges to *Miflet Ha'Avoda* and its electoral performances. During this research it was useful to compare and overlap these dynamics as they give a specific picture of the circumstances which favored the Labor electoral decline. specific picture of the circumstances which favored the Labor electoral decline. Israeli society, which is heterogeneous,

fluid, polarized and fragmented but it is possible to understand its mechanisms thanks to a sort of scheme built around the three main crossing-cut lines, defining three main groups characterized by different perceptions and attitudes towards ethnicity (*Ashkenazi-Mizrachi*), politics (left-right) and religion (observant and secular Jews). We discovered that these three lines of division are a trajectory along which the electorate distributes itself regarding some major issues of the public debate, resulting in an intense and growing polarization of the political arena.

The analysis of electoral dynamics allowed to understand how Israelis select their representative, through the discovery of their electoral criteria and of the reasons which motivate their political affiliation. It was possible to develop these questions thanks to the investigation of the most significant elections (like 1977, 1992, 1996 and 1999) in Israeli history, trying to catch the paramount dynamics. Understanding Israeli voting patterns in a historical perspective was fundamental in order to track down pivotal variables for the transformation both of the electorate and of the political system. This type of method allowed to better comprehend Labor decline in perspective.

Certainly, some voting patterns have been confirmed by the data and the dynamics analyzed: the first type involves the cleavages we have seen previously, making them to overlap and giving rise to preferences and common needs that guide the Israeli vote. The second type is more closely related to the different variables which triggered the political debate in the different electoral campaigns. For example, from 1977 to 1981 (when it reached its peak) identity of sub-communities was the variable that led significantly the choice of the electorate; the result was that the two major parties kept their predominance representing these two groups, the *Ashkenazi Labor* and the *Mizrachi Likud*. Instead, since 1984, the electoral debate in Israel relied mainly on the territorial/peace /security issues, giving birth to a process of polarization that deeply polarized the public opinion into two opposing camps. During the development of our analysis, we saw how the political vote reflects these identity and tribal dynamics and how they strengthened over the years, coming to its peak in 1996 and 1999 elections.

It is therefore clear that the causes to Labor Party's electoral decline from 2001 on, are complex and strictly intertwined not only with domestic changes of the political system or the paramount transformation of the Israeli society, but they are also connected to the strong identity issues that are expressed in the political debate over the territories. Moreover it is important to read these dynamics with an historical perspective, inside a long-term path of change.

Several observers stated that the crisis that *Miflagat Ha'avodah* is experiencing and the positive results of *Likud* camp are due mainly to some demographic dynamics which contributed to increase numerically the Israeli constituencies that are loyal supporters of the right/wing parties (*Sephardim*, Russian and the religious). These trends seemed to affirm this apparently irreversible success of the national-religious group.

But if we look at the electoral results of 2009, 2013 and 2015, we can observe how this demographic advance is not so overwhelming; in all these cases the victory of *Likud* was by a narrow margin (2013

and 2015) or was technical result (2009). These evidences bring us to the most interesting remarks emerged by this analysis: if the socio-demographic factors have always been fundamental in order to mobilize the electorate and in order to understand voting patterns in Israel, they are not sufficient to explain Labor defeats. Demographic trends are indeed important to understand social and political shifts; however, they alone do not explain a phenomenon which has a deep historical perspective.

Despite its current weakness, the Labor party is not doomed: *Ha'avodah* bet it all on the “land for peace” approach gambling on a specific definition of Israeli identity which could shape also the relationship with its neighbors. But, since the great debates over the State, its boundaries and identity it is not over yet, the Labor Party could re-establish its central role in the Israeli political scenario, trying to provide a new vision, as powerful and attractive, as the “land for peace” approach was for many years. The challenge for Israeli identity is still ongoing , the gamble is still open.

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GLOSSARY OF MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>NAME IN HEBREW</u>	<u>TRANSLITTERATION</u>
Agudat Yisrael	אגודת ישראל	
Ahdut Ha'Avoda	העבודה אחדות	
Alignment	המערך	HaMa'arach
Arab Democratic Party	ערבית דמוקרטית מפלגה	HaMiflaga HaDemokratit Ha'Aravit (al-Hizb al-Dimuqrati al-Arabi)
Balad – National Democratic Assembly	בל"ד - ברית לאומית דמוקרטית	Brit Leumit Demokratit (at-Tajamu' al-Waṭanī ad-Dīmuqrāṭī)
Black Panthers	הפנתרים השחורים	HaPanterim HaShhorim
Dash – Democratic Movement for change	ד"ש - תנועה דמוקרטית לשינוי	Tnua Demokratit LeShinui
Degel HaTorah	התורה דגל	
Gahal	גח"ל - ליברלים-חרות גוש	Gush Herut Liberalim
Gesher - National Social Movement	גשר - תנועה חברתית לאומית	Tnua Hevratit Leumit
Ha'Avoda - The Israeli Labor Party	העבודה - מפלגת העבודה הישראלית	Mifleget Ha'Avoda HaYisrelit
Hadash - Democratic Front for Peace and Equality	חד"ש - החזית הדמוקרטית לשלום ולשוויון	HaHazit HaDemokratit LeShalom uLeShivion (al-Jabhah ad-Dimuqrāṭīyah lis-Salām wa'l-Musāwah)
HaHaganah	ההגנה	
HaOlam HaZeh	הזה העולם	

HaPalmach	פלמ"ח - פלוגות מחץ	Plugot Maḥatz
HaPo'el HaTza'ir	הפועל הצעיר	
HaShomer	השומר	
HaShomer HaTza'ir	השומר הצעיר	
Haskalah	השכלה	
HaTzohar - Union of Revisionist Zionists	הצה"ר - ברית הציונים הרוויזיוניסטים	Brit HaTzionim HaRevizionistim
Herut	חרות	
Hibbat Zion	חיבת ציון	
Hovevei Zion	חובבי ציון	
Independent Liberals	ליברלים עצמאיים	Libralim Atzma'im
Irgun (Etzel)	ארגון - הארגון הצבאי הלאומי בארץ ישראל (אצ"ל)	Irgun Zvai Leumi
Israel Liberal Party	מפלגה ליברלית ישראלית	Miflaga Liberalit Yisraelit
Kach	ך"כ	
Lehi - Fighters for the Freedom of Israel	לח"י - לוחמי חרות ישראל	Lohamei Herut Yisrael
Likud	הליכוד	HaLikud
Mafdal - National Religious Party	מפד"ל - לאומית דתית מפלגה	Miflaga Datit Leumit
Maki - The Israeli Communist Party	מק" - המפלגה הקומוניסטית הישראלית	HaMiflaga HaKomunistit HaYisraelit (Al-Ḥizb ash-Shuyū'ī al-'Isrāīlī)
Mapai - The Workers Party of the Land of Israel	מפא"י - מפלגת פועלי ארץ ישראל	Mifleget Poalei Eretz Yisrael
Mapam - United Workers Party	מפ"ם - המאוחדת הפועלים פלגת	Mifleget HaPoalim HaMeuhede
Meimad - Jewish State, Democratic State	מימד - מדינה יהודית, מדינה דמוקרטית	Medina Yehudit, Medina Demokratit

Meretz	מרצ	
Moledet	מולדת	
One Israel	Yisrael Ahat	אחת ישראל
One People	Am Ehad	אחד עם
Po'alei Tzion	פועלי ציון	
Poalei Agudat Yisrael	פועלי אגודת ישראל	
Rafi - The Israeli Workers List	Reshimat Poalei Yisrael	רפ"י - רשימת פועלי ישראל
Ratz - Movement for Civil Rights and Peace	HaTnua LeZkhuyot HaEzrah veLaShalom	רצ - ולשלום האזרח לזכויות תנועה
Religious Torah Front	Hazit Datit Toratit	חזית דתית תורתית
Shas	Shomrei Sfarad	ש"ס - שומרי ספרד
Sheli - Left Camp of Israel	Mahaneh Sheli	של"י - מחנה שמאל לישראל
Shinui	שינוי	
Shlomtzion - Peace-Zion	Shalom-Zion	שלומציון
Ta'al - Arab Movement for Renewal	Tnua Aravit LeHithadshut	תע"ל - תנועה ערבית להתחדשות
Tami - Movement for the Heritage of Israel	Tnuat Masoret Yisrael	תמ"י - תנועת מסורת ישראל
Tehiya	תחיה	
The Free Center	HaMerkaz HaHofshi	החופשי המרכז
The Third Way	HaDerech HaShlishit	הדרך השלישית
Tkuma	תקומה	
Tzomet	תצומת	
United Arab List	HaReshima Ha'Aravit HaMeuhedet	הרשימה הערבית המאוחדת
United Religious Front	Hazit Datit Meuhedet	חזית דתית מאוחדת
United Torah Judaism	Yahadut HaTora HaMeuhedet	יהדות מאוחדת תורה
United Torah Judaism	Yahadut HaTora HaMeuhedet	יהדות מאוחדת תורה

Ya'ad - the Civil Rights
Movement

יעד-תנועה לזכויות האזרח Tnua LeZkhuyot HaEzrah

Yahad

יחד

Yisrael beAliyah

ישראל בעלייה

Yisrael Beiteinu

ישראל ביתנו

ANNEX I:

MIFLEGET HA'AVODA POLITICAL PLATFORMS FOR KNESSET ELECTIONS

Labor Party's platform for the Thirteenth Knesset, 1992 – The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party
Archives, Beit Berl-Israel.

מצע המפלגה

מבוא

ערב הבחירות לכנסת ה-13 ניצבת מדינת-ישראל על פרשת דרכים של הכרעות בנושאים החיוניים לעתידה ולאופייה של החברה והמדינה. המציאות הבינלאומית והאזורית המשתנה, סיכויי השלום, אפשרויות הגברת העלייה וצורכי הפיתוח הכלכלי והחברתי, מחייבים שינוי בסדרי הקדימויות בחברה הישראלית, על בסיס של הסכמה לאומית רחבה, תחת הנהגה אמינה ותוך חידוש ורענון המערכת השלטונית והפוליטית.

בשנתיים האחרונות הונהגה ממשלת ישראל על-ידי קואליציה ימנית קיצונית בראשות הליכוד ויצחק שמיר אשר דרדרה את החברה הישראלית כמעט בכל התחומים לשפל עמוק שלא ידענו כמותו אי-פעם בעבר. בראש ובראשונה המחלל האנטי-ציוני החמור של החמצת הסיכוי לעלייה המונית מבורכת, עליה חלמו ונאבקו דורות, בשל העדפת התנחלויות פוליטיות ועימות קנטרני ומיותר עם ארצות-הברית, ידידתנו העיקרית בזירה הבינלאומית, על פני קבלת סיוע לקליטת-העלייה. רק בשל החמצה זו בלבד ראוי שיוחלף השלטון בישראל.

אולם, אין זה המחלל היחיד. כשלונות ממשלת הליכוד גרמו למשבר אבטלה חמור, לקפאון בצמיחה המשקית, שפגעו במיוחד בעיירות הפיתוח, בשכונות ובשכבות המצוקה, להידרדרות ברמת החינוך ולפגיעה במחקר המדעי, למצוקה של זוגות הצעירים וחילים המשוחררים, מצוקה המגבירה ירידה, ועל כל אלה - גילויי הבזבז, השחיתות, הפגיעה בטוהר המידות ובסדרי מינהל תקין, כפי שהם באים לידי ביטוי בדו"חות האחרונים של מבקרת המדינה.

מפלגת העבודה מציגה סדר קדימויות אחר מול הסדר המעוות של ממשלת הימין, המעדיפה הוצאות רחבות-היקף בהתנחלויות במשולב עם מדיניות של ליברליזם פופוליסטי חסר אמינות ואחריות. מדיניות זו גרמה לבזבז המשאבים הלאומיים המוגבלים והיא באה על חשבון השקעות בתשתית לענפי המשק ובמקום ההתמודדות עם אתגרי קליטת העלייה, התעסוקה, מציאת פתרון לגל האבטלה הגואה והקטנת הפערים בחברה בישראל. מול כל אלה מציעה מפלגת העבודה במצעה, המעוגן בהחלטות הוועידה החמישית של המפלגה, סדרי עדיפויות שונים: בראשם, קידום אמיתי של תהליך השלום, לא כהצגה מאולצת של ממשלת הליכוד בשל לחץ בינלאומי, המערימה מכשולים וסירובים ההופכים את המשך התהליך לבלתי-אפשרי, אלא מתוך ראיית השלום, המבוסס על פשרות מציאותיות, כיעד מרכזי של מדינת-ישראל בתקופה זו, יעד שהשגתו תאפשר מימוש האתגרים העיקריים הניצבים כיום בפני החברה הישראלית.

העבודה מאמינה כי בשעה זאת דרוש וניתן להניף את דגל הביטחון והשלום ואת הדגל החברתי בעת ובעונה אחת. עוצמתה הביטחונית של המדינה תלויה בחוסנה החברתי

מדיניות לשלום וביטחון

שלום ומזרח תיכון חדש

העבודה נושאת חזון של מזרח תיכון חדש, שבו לא יהיו עוד מלחמות ולא מעשי טרור, ומשאבים כלכליים אדירים לא יוקדשו עוד למרוץ חימוש. נחיה במזרח תיכון בו שורר שלום, ויש בו שוק משותף עם מערכות אזוריות של השקיה, תיירות, תחבורה ותקשורת ושל שיתוף פעולה בתחומי אנרגיה, תרבות ומדע.

שלום וביטחון

המשא ומתן הישיר עם כל מדינות ערב ועם הפלשתינאים על שלום קבע יתקיים ללא תנאים מוקדמים ועל בסיס החלטות מועצת הביטחון 242 ו-338 בכל הגורות. השלום ייכון על בסיס הכרה של מדינות ערב והפלשתינאים בישראל כמדינה ריבונית באזור ובזכותה לחיות בשלום וביטחון.

על הסכמי השלום לקבוע את סיום הסכסוך הישראלי-ערבי ולדחות כל תביעה או דרישה בעתיד.

שלום יציב הוא מרכיב ביטחוני חשוב. עם זאת - יציבותו של השלום מחייבת שיהיו לישראל גם לעת שלום גבולות בני הגנה - שיקטינו סכנת תוקפנות ויאפשרו לישראל להתגונן בייעילות בכוחות עצמה - יחד עם סידורי ביטחון חיוניים.

במיימ לשלום - בהסדרי הביניים והקבע - תהיה ישראל נכונה לפשרות. בכל תהליך, הסכם והסדר תציב מפלגת העבודה את ביטחון ישראל כגורם מכריע ותבטיח שלא תהיה כל פגיעה בו.

התקדמות בשלבים

העבודה רואה את ההתקדמות לשלום באזור בשלושה שלבים:

- ◆ אוטונומיה מלאה ביהודה, שומרון וחבל עזה והסדר ביניים עם סוריה.
- ◆ הסדר קבע על בסיס פשרה טריטוריאלית והסדרי ביטחון.
- ◆ בניין מזרח תיכון חדש.

שלום עם הפלשתינאים וירדן

- ◆ ישראל תקדם את המיימ להסכם שלום של פשרה עם ירדן והפלשתינאים. ההסכם צריך להתבסס על הבטחת צורכי הביטחון של ישראל, החלטות האו"ם 242 ו-338 ועל הכרה בזכויות הפלשתינאים, לרבות זכויותיהם הלאומיות ועל בסיס

- ◆ השתתפותם בקביעת עתידם.
- ◆ ישראל תמשיך ותשלים את המו"מ עם הנציגות המוסמכת והמוסכמת של הפלשתינאים מבין תושבי השטחים שבידי ישראל משנת 1967, בין במשלחת משותפת עם ירדן או במשלחת נפרדת, על הסדר ביניים ועל הנהגת ממשל עצמי.
- ◆ העבודה מוכנה להידברות עם אישים וגורמים פלשתינאים המכירים בישראל, שוללים את הטרור ומקבלים את החלטות מועצת הביטחון 242 ו-338. מפלגת העבודה תעשה לשינוי התיקון לפקודת הטרור - בדבר איסור מפגשים עם ארגוני טרור, כך שענישה על מפגשים תחול רק על מי שפוגע או בכוונתו לפגוע בביטחון המדינה.
- ◆ ישראל תהיה מוכנה לקביעת לוח זמנים מוגדר ונוהל דיונים מחייב למעבר אל הסכם הקבע.
- ◆ במשא ומתן על הסכם הקבע עם ירדן והפלשתינאים ישתתפו ישראל, נציגות פלשתינאית וירדן. במשא ומתן זה ייקבעו גבולות הקבע, ההסדרים המדיניים והבטחוניים בשטחים שאותם תפנה ישראל ומרחב שיתוף הפעולה עם ישראל. המציאות המדינית באיזור, הצורך לפתור את בעיית הפליטים וצורכי הביטחון של ישראל מחייבים הסכם על מסגרת ירדנית פלשתינאית, שתהיה נכונה לשיתוף פעולה רחב עם ישראל, ולא מדינה פלשתינאית נפרדת ממערב לירדן.
- ◆ בעת המשא ומתן תעמוד ישראל על כך שבקעת הירדן וצפון מערב ים-המלח, בריבונות ישראל - יהיו את גבולה הביטחוני של המדינה. השטחים שתפנה ישראל יפורזו וצבא ערבי זר לא יחצה את הירדן ולא יוצב מערבה לו. ישראל תשמור בידיה שטחים חיוניים שאינם מאוכלסים בצפיפות על ידי ערבים כגון: סביבות ירושלים וגוש-עציון.
- ◆ יש להבטיח בהסכם כי יישובים יהודיים בשטחים שישראל תפנה יוכלו להשאר על מקומם ויובטח שלומם ובטחונם של המתישבים.
- ◆ לא תוקמנה התנחלויות חדשות ולא יעובו יישובים קיימים בשטחים, לבד מאזורי מרחב ירושלים ובקעת הירדן. בעת המו"מ תימנע ישראל ממהלכים ופעולות שיטבשו את ניהולו התקין של המו"מ, ותקפא הקמתן של התנחלויות חדשות למשך שנה אחת.
- ◆ הסכם שלום יכלול בתוכו תכנית ליישוב בעיית הפליטים הפלשתינאים מחוץ לגבולות ישראל. ביישוב בעיית הפליטים ייקראו להשתתף כל המדינות הערביות ובמיוחד ירדן ומדינות המפרץ. לשם כך יגויס חוץ בינלאומי. ישראל שוללת את זכות השיבה של הפליטים הפלשתינאים לשטחה הריבוני של מדינת ישראל.

שלום עם סוריה

- ◆ ישראל מחייבת מ"מ לשלום עם סוריה ללא תנאים מוקדמים, על בסיס החלטות מועצת הביטחון 242 ו-338.
- ◆ ישראל רואה ברמת הגולן אזור בעל חשיבות רבה לביטחונה, לשלומה ולהבטחת מקורות המים שלה, גם לעת שלום. ברמת הגולן, שעליה הוחל המשפט השיפוט והמינהל של ישראל - בכל הסכם שלום עם סוריה ובהסדרי הביטחון יימשכו הנוכחות והשליטה, ההתיישבותית והצבאית, של ישראל.
- ◆ יימשכו מאמצים לחיזוק היישובים הקיימים ברמת הגולן.

שלום עם לבנון

- ◆ ישראל מחייבת מ"מ לשלום עם לבנון ללא תנאים מוקדמים.
- ◆ ישראל נכונה להסכם שלום עם לבנון עצמאית וריבונית, משוחררת משליטה צבאית סורית ומנוכחות של כוחות צבאיים זרים וטרוריסטיים בכל שטחה.
- ◆ בהסכם השלום עם לבנון יישמרו האינטרסים הביטחוניים של מדינת ישראל ותושבי הצפון על ידי מגוון הסדרים שיבטיחו, בין השאר, הפסקה מוחלטת של פעולות טרור ומניעת חידושן.
- ◆ עד להסכם השלום תמשיך ישראל להגן על גבולה הצפוני ע"י רצועת ביטחון בדרום לבנון באמצעות כוחות מקומיים בגיבוי של צה"ל וע"י הסדרי ביטחון חיוניים אחרים.

הסדרים אזוריים

- ◆ את ההתקדמות למצב של שלום וביטחון במזרח התיכון יש ללוות ביצירת מערכות לשיתוף פעולה בפיתוח אזורי - למען שגשוג ורווחת האיזור כולו.

יחסי ישראל-מצרים

- ◆ חוזה השלום בין ישראל למצרים הינו פריצת דרך היסטורית, מדינית ואסטרטגית במזרח התיכון.
- ◆ ישראל תוסיף לקיים בקפידה, על-פי כללי המשפט הבינלאומי ועל בסיס הדדיות, את ההתחייבויות שנטלה על עצמה בחוזה השלום.
- ◆ העבודה קוראת לממשלת מצרים לפעול יחד עם ממשלת ישראל ליצירת אווירה הדדית חיובית בציבור ובכלי התקשורת כדי להעמיק בקרב שני העמים את האמונה בשלום וכדי לעודד את כל עמי האזור האחרים להאמין בשלום כדרך לפתרון סכסוכים ולשכנות טובה.

- ◆ העבודה מקווה כי ממשלת מצרים תפעל לקדם ולהרחיב את שיתוף הפעולה בינה לבין ישראל.

מדיניות הביטחון, מערכת הביטחון וצה"ל

- ◆ צה"ל יופעל אך ורק לאבטחת קיומה של מדינת ישראל, הגנתה, ביטחונה ושלומה. ההסכמה הלאומית בהפעלת כוחו של צה"ל הוא נושא לאומי חיוני שיש לכלול אותו בשיקוליה של הממשלה. יש להוציא את צה"ל מתחומי הפולמוס והמחלוקת הבין-מפלגתית.
- ◆ ההתעצמות הצבאית של מדינות ערביות ועוינותן מחייבת את ישראל לקיים עוצמה צבאית משמעותית בעלת יתרון איכותי על פני צבאות ערב. הצורך של ישראל לפתח יתרון איכותי מחריף על רקע ההתעצמות הניכרת של מדינות ערב בנשק וציוד מן המעלה הטכנולוגית הראשונה ובהתחשב בצימצום היקפו של צה"ל עקב קשיי התקציב.
- ◆ במסגרת הסכמי שלום אמת תבחן ישראל בחיוב את צמצום החימוש באיזור. ייקבעו דרכים להקטנת כוחות צבאיים, ליצירת מאזן כוחות מוסכם ולמניעת הכנסתו של נשק השמדה המוני לאזור.
- ◆ צה"ל וזרועות הביטחון יקפידו בכל פעולותיהם על טוהר הנשק ועל מוסר הלחימה הגבוה.
- ◆ ישראל תעניק עדיפות גבוהה למחקר ופיתוח עצמאיים בתחומי הביטחון ולהרחבת הייצור העצמי של נשק וציוד צבאי חדיש ומתוחכם. ייתן דגש מיוחד לפיתוח, ייצור והצטיידות באמצעי לחימה בהתאמה ללקחים ממלחמת המפרץ, ולצרכי שדה הקרב העתידי.
- ◆ הדרך העיקרית לסיומה של האינתיפאדה היא מדינית. תפקיד הממשלה הוא להפעיל את צה"ל ושאר זרועות הביטחון כנגד הטרור, האלימות והחתרנות, ובמקביל וביתר שאת, לקדם את תהליך השלום עם הפלסטינאים.
- ◆ ישראל תפעל ללא ליאות במישור הרעיוני והמדיני לרתימת מדינות אחרות למאבק נגד הטרור ולשילת הלגיטימציה מארגוני הטרור והמסייעים בידם. המאבק בטרור ובחתרנות ישא אופי הגנתי ויזום כאחד, וממשלת ישראל תראה את עצמה חופשית לבחור את המקום, השיטה, האמצעים, והעיתוי. מאבק זה ינוהל על-פי צרכיה המדיניים והאסטרטגיים הכלליים של ישראל.
- ◆ ישראל תפעל למניעת אספקת נשק מאסיבית ואיכותית למדינות ערביות, אספקה המסכנת את שלום האיזור. במיוחד תפעל למניעת התפתחות כושר התקפי אסטרטגי למדינות ערביות בטיילי קרקע-קרקע, באמצעי לוחמה לא קונבנציונליים, במטוסי איכות, בטיילי אוויר-קרקע ובפצצות דלק-אוויר.
- ◆ ישראל תיאבק נגד ההתעלמות הבינלאומית המאפשרת למדינות האזור לפתח

ולהצטייד בנשק לא קונבנציונלי. ישראל תדרוש לנקוט צעדים נגד חברות ומדינות המסייעות בתחום זה.

◆ ישראל מחייבת את שיתוף הפעולה האסטרטגי בינה לבין ארה"ב ותפעל להידוק ולהרחבתו.

חובת הגיוס לצה"ל

◆ גיוס חובה לנשים כגברים הוא מיסודות האזרחות והביטחון של המדינה.
◆ דחיית השירות הצבאי מקיפה היום רבבות צעירים. תופעה זו מפלה בין אזרחי המדינה ויש לה השפעה מסרית על הצעירים המתגייסים.

מפלגת העבודה תפעל לתיקון המעוות על פי העקרון של שוויון חובות ושוויון זכויות בין אזרחי המדינה. מפלגת העבודה מציינת לחיוב את הניסיון המוצלח של שילוב לימוד תורה ושירות צבאי במסגרת ישיבות ההסדר.

◆ יימשך המאמץ לגיוס נרחב של נשים לשירות בצה"ל ותימשך הפעולה החשובה לשילובן במיגוון מקצועות ותפקידים נרחב.

◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לביצוע חוק השירות הלאומי תשי"ג/1953 במטרה להטיל על כל הבנות הפטורות משירות צבאי חובת שירות לאומי מקביל בתחומי קליטת העלייה, חינוך, בריאות וסעד.

ישראל וארה"ב

ממשלת ישראל תעשה מאמץ מיוחד לשקם את יחסיה עם ארה"ב שנפגעו קשות על ידי מדיניות הליכוד ולהתמיד בטיפול וביסוס יחסי הידידות המיוחדים עם ארה"ב.

◆ עימות עם ארה"ב עלול לגרום נזק כבד לישראל. הקירבה המיוחדת והזיקה בין ישראל לארה"ב נתהוו לא רק בשל אינטרס אסטרטגי אלא בעיקר הודות לאופיה המוסרי ולאורח החיים הדמוקרטי של ישראל.

הסיוע הכלכלי והצבאי ושיתוף הפעולה האסטרטגי שואבים את חיותם וצידוקם בעיני העם האמריקאי מכך שישראל מזוהה כחברה הבנויה על עקרונות מוסריים, חזון חלוצי ומשטר דמוקרטי. המתרחקות והמשברים שממשלת הליכוד יוצרת חדשות לבקרים עם ממשלת ארה"ב פוגעים לא רק בקשרים חיוניים אלה, אלא אף מסכנים את ריקמת היחסים המיוחדים שנבנו בעמל רב בארבעים השנים האחרונות.

◆ יחסי האמון ושיתוף הפעולה הגובר בין ארה"ב ומדינות חבר העמים הינם תנאי הכרחי לשלום העולם ולהשגת שלום בר קיימא במזרח התיכון. מפלגת העבודה תומכת במהלכים לריסון ופרוק הנשק בעולם. העבודה תקדם בברכה כל מאמץ ליישוב סכסוכים אזוריים וצמצום החימוש של העולם הערבי והמוסלמי ותתבע

- ◆ מהמעצמות למנוע את הכנסתו של נשק השמדה המוני לאזור.
- ◆ הסיוע הכלכלי מארה"ב והסיוע המקווה מהמדינות התעשייתיות הגדולות מקבל משמעות מיוחדת נוכח אתגר העלייה הגדולה וקליטתה. סיוע זה חיוני לבניית דיור לעולים, לפיתוח תעסוקה, להגברת היצוא ולהשגת העצמאות הכלכלית. בהקשר זה נרם נזק קשה למדינה בגלל מדיניותה השגויה של ממשלת הליכוד.

ישראל ומדינות חבר העמים (ברה"מ לשעבר)

- ◆ העבודה מציינת בסיפוק את התפתחות הקשרים בין מדינות חבר העמים וישראל בעת האחרונה ומברכת על פתיחת השערים לעלייה גדולה ועל חידוש היחסים הדיפלומטיים.
- ◆ העבודה תובעת ממדינות חבר העמים לפעול בתוקף נגד כל גילויי האנטישמיות של קבוצות ושל יחידים בתוכה.

ישראל, אירופה והשוק המשותף

- ◆ היותה של אירופה היבשת המפותחת והמסגרת הכלכלית הקרובה ביותר לישראל, עושה אותה לבעלת חשיבות מיוחדת לעתידנו המדיני והכלכלי. רוב הייצוא והייבוא מישראל ואליה - הוא עימה. ישראל רואה עצמה חלק מהשוק האירופי, מאז נחתם ההסכם המיוחד בין ישראל לביתו.

ישראל, סין ויפן

- ◆ העבודה המודעת למעמדה המרכזי של סין באסיה ובזירה הבינלאומית, תשאף לחיזוק היחסים בין סין וישראל ולפיתוח והרחבת קשרי המסחר, המדע והתיירות בין שתי המדינות. העבודה מודאגת מתרומתה של סין למרוץ החימוש המסוכן במזרח התיכון, במיוחד מאספקת טילי קרקע-קרקע למדינות האזור המאיימות על ישראל. על ממשלת ישראל לפעול במישרין ובאמצעות ידידיה בעולם לשינוי מדיניות זו של סין.
- ◆ העבודה מודעת לחשיבות מעמדה של יפן כמעצמה כלכלית מהמעלה הראשונה והיא מציינת בחיוב את ראשית השינוי המסתמן ביחסיה של ממשלת יפן כלפי ישראל וכלפי החרס הערבי כנגדה. העבודה מקווה להידוק קשריה של יפן עם ישראל ומשוכנעת שקידום תהליך השלום יסייע לרתימת יפן לגלות מעורבות כלכלית מקיפה יותר בפיתוח האזור וישראל.

ישראל והעולם השלישי

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תתמוך במאבקן של מדינות הי"עולם השלישי" למען חירות האדם וכבודו: למען עיצוב חברה צודקת ומשוחררת מניצול, אפליה, דיכוי ועוני ולמען הבטחת קיומן של זכויות האדם והדמוקרטיה.
- ◆ העבודה קוראת למדינות העשירות והמפותחות כלכלית, להגביר את שיתוף הפעולה והתמיכה בפיתוח הכלכלי, החברתי והתרבותי של מדינות הי"עולם השלישי" ובהעלאת רוחתם של בני עמם. העבודה תעשה למען המשך והרחבה של פעילות זו בשנים הקרובות.
- ◆ העבודה תעשה לחיזוק יתר של הקשרים המסורתיים עם מדינות אמריקה הלטינית, אפריקה, אסיה ואוקיאניה ולהעמקתם בתחומי הכלכלה, החקלאות, המדע והטכנולוגיה, הרפואה, החינוך והתרבות.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תעשה להעמקת היחסים הכלכליים והפוליטיים עם הודו.

ישראל והעולם המוסלמי

- ◆ ישראל שואפת להבנה והידברות עם העמים המוסלמים. היא תחתור לכינון יחסי גומלין של שיתוף פעולה וסיוע הדדי עם מדינות מוסלמיות באסיה, באפריקה ובאירופה.
- במיוחד יש לחפש כל דרך לקשרים עם מדינות ואירגונים באיסלם, הנמנעים מלתמוך באיסלם הפונדמנטליסטי.
- ◆ העבודה קוראת לגורמים המתקדמים בעולם המוסלמי לזנוח את העמדות הקיצוניות של הסירוב, לרסן את גילויי האיבה והטרור ולהכיר בזכות קיומה של מדינת ישראל כחלק בלתי נפרד מאיזור זה של העולם, כשווה בין שווים.

ירושלים

- ◆ ירושלים, בירתה של מדינת ישראל ומרכזו של העם היהודי, תישאר מאוחדת ושלמה, בריבונות ישראל.
- ◆ בעת המשא ומתן לשלום תעמוד הממשלה על כך שסביבות ירושלים, גוש עציון וצפון מערב ים המלח יהיו בריבונות ישראל.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תבטיח את המשך חופש הגישה, חופש הביטוי וחופש הפולחן, במקומות הקדושים בירושלים, לבני כל העמים והדתות. בירושלים, עיר הקודש אליה נשואות עיניהם של מיליוני מאמינים בני דתות שונות בכל העולם יובטח המעמד הדתי המיוחד של המקומות הקדושים לאיסלם ולנצרות בהנהלה עצמית.
- ◆ סובלנות ואורך רוח ימשיכו להיות עקרון יסוד במדיניות המנחה את פעילות הממשלה והעירייה. הממשלה תראה בעקרון של מתן שירותים שווים, תוך התייחסות לצרכים המיוחדים של האוכלוסיה המגוונת יעד חשוב ומרכזי לביסוס אחדותה של ירושלים.
- ◆ הממשלה תראה כמחוייבות וחובה, עפ"י חוק, לכבד את זכויותיהם האזרחיות והדתיות של כל חלקי האוכלוסיה בעיר, ללא הבדל דת ולאום, ולדאוג לצורכי כלל התושבים.
- ◆ הבטחת חוסנה של הריקמה החברתית בירושלים, מחייבת מאמצים מיוחדים בתחומי החינוך, התרבות, הרווחה והשיכון, על מנת להבטיח את הצרכים היחודיים של מגוון האוכלוסיות בירושלים. הממשלה תדאג למרכיבים חברתיים בעלי חשיבות מיוחדת, לטיפוח מנהיגות מקומית, לשיפור איכות החיים, החברה והסביבה של בירת ישראל.
- ◆ ממשלת ישראל בראשות העבודה תעמיד לרשות עיריית ירושלים את התקציבים הדרושים להמשך הפיתוח של מערכות התשתית בכל רחבי העיר. כמו כן תבטיח כי תנאי הדיוור, המשכנתאות והתמריצים בירושלים יהיו זהים לאלו הקיימים ביישובים אחרים באזור.
- ◆ הממשלה תפעל להקמת מפעלים חדשים בעיר, לפיתוח אזור התעשייה כאזור פיתוח מועדף ותקדם את פעילותם של מוסדות המדע, המחקר והרפואה בעיר, תוך הקצאת משאבים לשם כך.
- ◆ בשל מצבה המיוחד של ירושלים והיקף הבעיות העומדות בפניה, תעניק הממשלה סמכויות מיוחדות למינהל העירוני בתחומי החינוך, התחבורה, תכנון העיר ורווחה, תוך דאגה לתיאום היישום עם תכניות ארציות.

דמוקרטיה וממשל

לשם ביצור יסודות הדמוקרטיה ייצובה וחיזוק שלטון החוק בישראל תפעל ממשלה בראשות העבודה:

- ◆ ליישום החוק לבחירה ישירה של ראש הממשלה.
- ◆ לשינוי שיטת הבחירות לכנסת לפיה חלק מחברי כנסת ייבחרו באזורים, בשיטה אזורית יחסית וחלק אחר בשיטה יחסית ארצית, ולהעלאת אחוז החסימה, בבחירות לכנסת לפחות ל-2 אחוזים.
- ◆ העבודה תמשיך להאבק למען השלמת החוקה וחקיקת חוק יסוד זכויות האדם והאזרח, שיקיף את כל תחומי החיים ויכלול, בין היתר, גם היבטים הקשורים בזכויות כלכליות-חברתיות, כמתחייב מהשקפת עולמו. לבית המשפט העליון, בשבתו כבית משפט לחוקה, תהיה סמכות לבטל הוראות חוק הנוגדות חוק יסוד זה.
- ◆ תיערך רפורמה במינהל הציבורי, במגמה לייעל את המנגנון, לשפר את השירותים לציבור, לפשט תהליכים ביורוקרטים, ולצמצם את הניכור בין האזרחים והשירות הציבורי.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל למניעת פוליטיזציה של המינהל הציבורי ולהבטחת מעמדם הממלכתי של עובדי הציבור.
- ◆ העבודה תקפיד על התנהגות שליחיה בשירות הציבור על-פי נורמות נאותות ותדרוש מהם לתת דוגמה אישית במילוי תפקידם.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל לעגן את זכות הציבור לדעת ואת חופש הביטוי בחוקת המדינה.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל לשינוי פקודת העיתונות המנדטורית והחלקים בתקנות ההגנה (שעת חרום) 1945 שיש בהם פגיעה בעקרונות חופש העיתונות וזכות הציבור לדעת וזאת, בחקיקה ישראלית מקורית.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תבטיח את עצמאותה ואי-תלותה של רשות השידור.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל לחיזוק מעמדו וזכויותיו של האזרח באמצעות ביצוע המלצות ועדת קוברסקי לבדיקת שירות המדינה, המגדירות בין השאר, את סמכויות הרשויות והגבלותיהן, לרבות הגבלת השימוש במידע על האזרח על-ידי הרשויות וזכות האזרח למידע והגבלה ברורה של זכות הרשויות לחזור לביתו של האזרח ולפגוע בפרטיותו. יורחב הפיקוח ותוחמר הענישה על שימוש באלים כנגד אזרחים.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תדון בדו"ח מבקרת המדינה ותפיק לקחים מהביקורת ותפעל לתיקון הליקויים, למינהל תקין ולעקירת תופעות השחיתות.

חינוך

ממשלה בראשות העבודה תעמיד את קידום החינוך כמטרה מרכזית במדיניותה הלאומית ותעניק לו עדיפות בהקצאות משאבים ממלכתיים ניכרים.

יעדי המדיניות:

- ◆ מאמץ עליון, שיטתי ונמרץ לסגירת פערים חינוכיים-חברתיים, והפיכת החינוך למגשר על פני הפערים, הניגודים והקיטוב הקיימים בחברה הישראלית.
- ◆ חתירה לשילובם המלא של בני כל העליות בחברה הישראלית.
- ◆ טיפוח הפלורליזם החינוכי לסוגיו והחברתי לקהילתי תוך הנחלת ערכי יסוד משותפים, ברוח מטרות החינוך הממלכתי.
- ◆ הבטחת שוויון מעמדו של החינוך במגזרים הערבי והדרוזי, הבדואי והצ'רקסי לחינוך במגזר היהודי תוך הקצאת משאבים מיוחדים לשיפורו וראה להלן הפרק על ערכי ישראל והדרוזים).
- ◆ הבטחת הזדמנות לכל אדם למצות את הפוטנציאל הגנוז בו, יכולתו וכישוריו.
- ◆ הגדלת מספר הזוכים לתואר אקדמי מקרב כל העדות והקבוצות החברתיות.
- ◆ העלאת רמתם, איכותם ומעמדם המקצועי של עובדי החינוך.
- ◆ הענקת מרחב מגוון ועשיר של הזדמנויות חינוכיות לפרט לבחור את דרכו כאדם עצמאי, משכיל, פעיל ויוצר בחברה, למעגליה השונים ולזכות כצרכן מעושר תרבות.

הדרך

יעדים אלה יושגו באמצעות שינוי מבנה מערכת החינוך, סדר עדיפויותיה, ודגשיה התוכניים. השינוי יתבצע תוך צמידות לשמירת האינטגרציה החינוכית כמטרה לעצמה וכאמצעי לצמצום הפערים החברתיים על ידי מתן הזדמנות שווה לכל התלמידים ואפשרויות עידוד לזקוקים לכך, למצות את הפוטנציאל האינדיבידואלי ולהגיע להישגים ולמצויינות אישית.

טיפול התשתית המשותפת

- ◆ יישום רעיון האינטגרציה במערכת החינוך היסודית והעליונה ושיפורה בחטיבת הביניים.
- ◆ יישום חוק חינוך חינוס, אותו יזמה המפלגה לגילאי 5 - 3.
- ◆ קביעה בחקיקה של ההיקף החינוכי הנדרש של שעות לימוד חובה חינוס, כדי למנוע

המשך הקיצוצים בשעות ההוראה.

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות מפלגת העבודה תפעל להגברת קצב היישום של חוק יום חינוך ארוך, אותו יזמה המפלגה, ותפעל לחדש בהדרגה את מפעל ההזנה בבתי-הספר. כמו כן תפעל הממשלה ליישום חוק החינוך המיוחד.

תמורה ביחסי מרכז-פריפריה:

- ◆ העברת יותר תקציבים ממלכתיים המיועדים לחינוך לאחריות ביצועית של הרשויות תוך שמירת האחריות לקביעת מדיניות החינוך הלאומית בידי משרד החינוך, כדי שהמשאבים יגיעו אל המסד, אל התלמיד.

חיזוק המוסד החינוכי באמצעות שינוי בהיערכות הבית-ספרית:

- ◆ העבודה תפעל למימושו הלכה למעשה, של חוק החינוך הממלכתי בדבר גיוון בחינוך ועל-פיו תמומש זכות ההורים להיות מעורבים בחיי בית-הספר ושותפים לעיצוב דמותו, בהתאם לערכיהם ולצרכי חינוך ילדיהם.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל לכינוס של בתי ספר אוטונומיים, בעלי ייחוד חינוכי ואופי מוגדר במערכת החינוך, לרמותיה ולמסגרותיה העיוניות והמקצועיות, והתאמתם לצרכי הקהילה ההורים והילד והבטחת חודמנות שווה לעגשות אליהם לבני כל השכבות והקבוצות החברתיות.
- ◆ העבודה תדאג לטיפול בתי-ספר המושתתים על ערכי עבודה וחברה, שומרים על רמה חינוכית גבוהה, פועלים בשיתוף עם הקהילה.
- ◆ העבודה מחייבת, כחלק מההכשרה לחיים בחברה טכנולוגית, המושתתת על ערכים הומניסטיים, הכנסת "סל" מקצועות היצירה, האמנות והתרבות בצד סל מקצועות מדעי-טכנולוגי בסיסי שייטנו לכלל התלמידים.
- ◆ העבודה תעודד פיתוחן והרחבת פעילותן של תנועות הנוער המטפחות את ערכי השקפת עולמה.

מימוש הפוטנציאל של התלמידים, עידוד המצוינות האישית של מחנכים ותלמידים כאחד, מחייבים לפעול בהדרגה לארגון מחדש של מוסדות החינוך באמצעות:

- ◆ צמצום גודל הכיתה הסטנדרטי
- ◆ הקטנה אופטימאלית של גודל בית הספר.
- ◆ חיזוק מעמדו של איש החינוך, שהוא הנושא המרכזי של המפנה הנדרש במערכת החינוך. המפנה במערכת מהווה את המפתח לתמורה היסודית הנדרשת במעמד החברתי והמקצועי של עובדי החינוך וההוראה, בתנאי עבודתם ושכרם.

- ◆ הקמת מסגרות קבועות לליווי ולסיוע מקצועי לצוותי המורים והמחנכים, לחיזוק סמכותו המקצועית ומרחב שיתופו בקביעת דמותו של בית הספר ועיצוב פניו.
- ◆ העבודה תעודד רשויות מקומיות להקים מועצות חינוך שתפעלנה בתחומן להבלטת מרכזיותו של נושא החינוך ולעידוד פתיחות במערכת בהתאם לצרכי הקהילה ותושביה.

חינוך גבוה ומדע

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להקצאת משאבים חולמים לחינוך הגבוה, על מנת להעלות את מעמדה המדעי והטכנולוגי של ישראל, על מנת למשוך מדענים אליה, ולמנוע בריחת מוחות ממנה.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל ליישום מדיניות טכנולוגית לאומית, שתבסס על התמרת הידע המדעי אקדמי לממשות טכנולוגית, אשר תהווה בסיס לתעשייה מתקדמת בעלת משמעות כלכלית מרכזית. לשם כך יש להבטיח:
 - * יצירת תמריצים כלכליים למחקר מדעי בניהול משותף עם גורמי תעשייה והקמתם של מרכזים לאומיים למחקר וטכנולוגיה.
 - * יצירת כלים תמריציים כלכליים לפיתוח יזמות חדשות ויכולת תעשייתית בכל תחומי הטכנולוגיות המתקדמות ובמיוחד, יצירת שותפויות עסקיות עם חברות זרות, במטרה להבטיח את שילובה של ישראל בכלכלה העולמית.
 - * הממשלה תפעל להרחבה ולהקמה של מוסדות להשכלה על תיכונית בעירות הפיתוח, בהתיישבות הכפרית, כשלוחות של מכוני המדע והמחקר הגבוהים, במגמה ליצירת מצב בו כל בוגר תיכון יוכל לרכוש השכלה אקדמית. כדי לממש יעד זה תפעל המפלגה להענקת סיוע משמעותי לסטודנטים הזקוקים לכך ותחתור להנהגת שכר לימוד חינם בכל מוסדות ההשכלה הגבוהה.
 - * הממשלה תפעל להקמת מכללות חדשות בפיקוח המועצה להשכלה גבוהה, להרחבת החינוך הגבוה.

חברה וכלכלה

מבוא

- ◆ במרכז תפיסתה החברתית-כלכלית של העבודה עומדת הבטחת ביטחון, רווחתו ועילוי של האדם. אנו מאמינים כי הדרך לכך היא דאגה מתמדת לשוויון הזדמנויות וצדק חברתי. מתן אפשרות לכל פרט להביא לידי ביטוי את כישוריו ויכולתו.
- ◆ בשל מדיניותה ההרסנית והשנוייה של הממשלה בראשות הליכוד, ניצב הליכוד חדל-אונים וללא תכניות פעולה מול המשבר אליו נקלעו ענפי התעשייה והחקלאות ולמול אתגרי העלייה והאבטלה הגואה.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תנהיג תכנית כלכלית חדשה. תכנית זו תשנה את סדרי העדיפויות, בהתאם לעקרונות המדיניות הכלכלית-חברתית שלה.
- ◆ המשק הישראלי חייב להתאים עצמו לניהול חופשי ממגבלות מנהליות וממעורבות יתר של הממשלה בחיי המשק והכלכלה. אולם הניסיון הישראלי, כמו גם הניסיון של ארצות מפותחות, מצביע על כך שבמצבי משבר, מלחמה, או עלייה בהיקפים גדולים, השוק אינו מתפקד ונדרשת מעורבות ממשלתית וציבורית מסיבית לשם החזרת המערכות הכלכליות לשיווי משקל שבו יוכל השוק להעניק לכלכלה את המנוע והבקרה לפעולתה. כמו כן, מילוי יעדים לאומיים והטיפול במגזרים מסויימים במשק (כגון חקלאות) מחייבים תכנון לאומי ומעורבות ממשלתית מסויימת. גל העלייה מחייב מעורבות ממשלתית ניכרת בעידוד הצמיחה, ביצירת מקומות תעסוקה ובהמצאת פתרונות דיור. כך גם המשבר החמור של המשק החקלאי.
- ◆ לכל תושבי המדינה הזכות לתעסוקה ולבטחון סוציאלי מקיף בתחומי רווחה, בריאות, חינוך, שיכון וסיעוד לעת זקנה. על הממשלה להבטיח בחוק סל שירותים חברתיים ברמה שתקבע מומן לזמן בהתאם לאפשרויות המשק והצרכים.
- דרך אספקת השירותים תעשה מתוך כוונה לאפשר חופש בחירה מירבי של השירותים לציבור המשתמשים והזכאים ובמגמה ליעל את השירותים החברתיים ובלבד שחופש הבחירה לא יהפוך כלי ליצירת מדינת רווחה לעשירים ולפגיעה בשכבות מעוטות יכולת.
- ◆ העבודה תעניק עדיפות ברורה לאיכלוס ופיתוח כלכלי של הנגב והגליל. לשם כך, תפעל לחידוש העידוד והסיוע לתושבי איזורים אלה כדי להקטין את הנטל המוטל עליהם. העבודה תגדיל ההשקעה בתשתיות אשר תקרבנה איזורים אלו למרכזי הפעילות הכלכלית, ותפעל להגדלת סיוע ליזמים בהקמת מפעלים כדי לייצר מקומות תעסוקה הולמים אשר ימשכו לאזורים אלו עולים וותיקים וימנעו עזיבה של צעירים בני המקום.

עקרונות המדיניות הכלכלית - חברתית

- ◆ העבודה דוגלת בקיומו של משק מעורב-תחרותי המורכב מהמגזר הפרטי, הממשלתי ומהמגזר הציבורי וההסתדרותי, המתנהל על בסיס כלכלי-עיסקי ללא אפליה ואשר בו שוויון הזדמנויות לכל.
- ◆ כדי לקדם את כלכלת ישראל לקראת תעסוקה מלאה, תוך כדי שמירה על יציבותו של המשק, ממשלה בראשות העבודה תקדם ההידברות בין ההסתדרות הכללית, הממשלה והארגונים הכלכליים.
- ◆ הממשלה תבצע מדיניות חשיפה שקולה ומאוזנת, שתביא בחשבון את הצורך בחשיפה מחד גיסא ואת בעיית האבטלה והמחסור בפתרונות תעסוקה מאידך גיסא. במקביל תופעל מערכת סיוע למפעלים ברי-הבראה, שייפגעו כתוצאה מהחשיפה.
- ◆ הממשלה תצמצם ככל האפשר מעורבותה בפעילות העיסקית הרגילה והישירה ותקדם מכירת מפעלים בבעלותה תוך הידברות עם עובדיהם. מטרת המכירה: גיוס כסף להשקעות, לפיתוח המשק והפסקת קיומם של שיקולים פוליטיים זרים בדרך ניהולם של גופים עסקיים.
- ◆ תהליך ההתייעלות של המגזר הציבורי, חייב להיות מלווה בצימצום בירוקרטיה בכל התחומים, בראש ובראשונה יש לקצר תהליכים פורמליים המכבידים על התחום העיסקי ועל הטיפול בנושאי הפרט.
- ◆ מפלגת העבודה תומכת בקיומו של חוק שכר מינימום המונע ניצול של עובדים ומבטיח יתר שוויוניות בחלוקת ההכנסות.
- ◆ מפלגת העבודה תומכת במתן סל שירותים חברתיים אוניברסליים ושוויוניים לכלל האוכלוסייה אשר יוגדר בחוק. כל אזרח יהיה זכאי לקבל שירותים חברתיים אלה. גובה התשלום לשירותים מעבר לסל האמור יהיה פרוגרסיבי ויונהג על-פי קריטריונים של הכנסה לנפש, אזורי מגורים וגילם של מקבלי השרות.
- ◆ האצת קצב הצמיחה תתאפשר על ידי גידול במאמצי ההשקעות, החיסכון, גיוס הון מחו"ל ומדיניות כלכלית כוללת מתאימה, יצירת אווירה תומכת בפעילות העסקית ופתיחת ענפים המתאפיינים בקרטלים ומונופולים בפני יזמים חדשים.
- ◆ עיקר המאמץ בהשקעות יופנה להכנת תשתית מתקדמת בתחבורה, חשמל, תקשורת, מים וביו, תוך דגש על איזורי פיתוח, לסיוע להשקעות בתעשיות עתירות מדע, בתעשיות יצוא, בהתחדשות בתעשיות קיימות, ובמחקר ופיתוח.
- ◆ הגדלת החיסכון תתאפשר על ידי הגברת מאמצי היעול במשק הציבורי, שמירה על מדיניות תקציבית אחראית ועידוד החסכון העיסקי והפרטי על ידי שמירת יציבות, הימנעות מהטלת מיסים וערעור האמון בחיסכון.
- ◆ גיוס ההון מחו"ל יתבסס על ניהול מדיניות חוץ וביטחון אחראית החותרת להסכמי שלום והסדרי ביטחון, ועל הגברת שיתוף העם היהודי בתפוצות בהשקעות.

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תתמוך בביצוע הרפורמה בשוק ההון הכוללת הקטנת מעורבות הממשלה בשוק זה, פיתוח שוק הון סיכון ופתיחתו המבוקרת של שוק ההון הישראלי לתנועות הון בינלאומיות.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תנקוט מדיניות מוניטרית מאזנת לשמירה על היציבות במשק והקטנת האינפלציה. גיבוש המדיניות השוטפת ייעשה בתהליך הידברות בין הממשלה, המעסיקים וההסתדרות, תוך מגמה להגיע להבנה בנושאי מדיניות השכר, המיסים, התעסוקה והמחירים. השכר הריאלי במשק יעלה בעקבות הפריץ.
- ◆ ניהול מדיניות סחר המושתתת על הגברת המאמצים להשתלבות המשק בסחר העולמי ובמסגרות כלכליות בינלאומיות, שער חליפין ריאלי, וחשיפה מבוקרת ליבוא מתחרה.

אמצעים

מדיניות התקציב

- ◆ התקציב ימשיך לשמש כמכשיר מרכזי להקטנת הפערים החברתיים ולחלוקה צודקת יותר של ההכנסות.
- ◆ תקציב המדינה יבטא את סידרי העדיפויות הלאומיים, את צורכי קליטת העלייה והתעסוקה ואת הצורך המירבי במניעת חידוש הלחצים האינפלציוניים במשק.

תעסוקה והכשרה מקצועית

- ◆ העבודה רואה בהבטחת תעסוקה לכל דורש וביכולת להתפרנס בכבוד זכות יסוד של כל אזרח.
- ◆ בשים לב לאבטלה החמורה תפעל ממשלה בראשות העבודה ליצירת מקומות עבודה חדשים למובטלים, למשוכרי צה"ל, (ראה - להלן) לוותיקים ולעולים החדשים (ראה - להלן) ולכל דורש.
- ◆ העבודה שוללת שימוש מכון באבטלה כמכשיר מדיניות לפתרון בעיות כלכליות. ממשלה בראשות העבודה תיתן עדיפות עליונה לצמיחה כלכלית במטרה לפתור את משבר התעסוקה הפוקד את המשק, בייחוד בערי הפיתוח.
- ◆ הממשלה תקצה משאבים ותגייס משאבים להשקעות בתשתית, מחקר ופיתוח להקמת פרויקטים וליצירת מקומות עבודה.
- ◆ הממשלה תיעזר במכשיר ביטוח האבטלה בתקופת ההסתגלות של העולים לחיים חדשים בארץ וליכולתם של מפעלים מסויימים לקלוט עובדים תוך כדי הכשרה מקצועית הולמת.
- ◆ יינתנו תמריצים זמניים למפעלים עסקיים שיובילו להגברת התעסוקה.

מיסוי

ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לצמצום הדרגתי ומשמעותי של נטל המס המוטלים על הכנסות יחידים וחברות, להעלאת הרצפה וריווח מדרגות המס המוטל על יחידים, להורדת שיעורי המכס ומס קניה בהתאם למדיניות החשיפה המבוקרת, לביטול מס המעסיקים, ולהגדלת המאמצים לחשיפת המשתמטים מתשלום מס ולגביית מס אמת. העבודה תתנגד להטלת מס על קצבאות הביטוח הלאומי.

שוק ההון

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להגדלת תחרות בין המוסדות הפועלים בשוק ההון ולפתיחתו המבוקרת לתנועות הון בינלאומיות.
- ◆ הממשלה תפעל לקיים שער ריבית ריאלי ויציב ככל הניתן. המגמה הבסיסית של המדיניות תהיה ששער הריבית בישראל יעלה על שער הריבית שישורר בעולם המערבי המתועש.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעיל רפורמה בשוק ההון שמטרותיה: הקטנת מעורבות הממשלה וחלקה בשוק ההון, עידוד החיסכון הציבורי, העסקי והפרטי וחיווק הבורסה כמכשיר לגיוס השקעות.

הצרכנות

- ◆ העבודה תגבש מדיניות, המבטאת פתיחות והגברת התחרות במשק אשר לה השפעה חיובית על שיפור רמת החיים ואיכותם בישראל. העבודה תפעל לעדכון, להרחבה ולשיפור של החקיקה הקיימת להגנת הצרכן ולהוסיף חוקים וצווים, שיגנו על הצרכן בתחומים שעדיין אינו מוגן בהם.

התעשייה

- ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל בצורה נמרצת ליצור את התנאים הנדרשים למימוש היכולת הרבה הטמונה בתעשייה על ידי:
- ◆ הגדלת יכולת גיוס ההון לתעשייה באמצעות הקטנת מעורבות הממשלה וחלקה בשוק ההון, הגדלת התחרות בין המוסדות הפיננסיים ופתיחה מבוקרת של שוק ההון הישראלי בפני תנועות הון בינלאומיות שתפעל לירידת מחיר ההון לתעשייה. יצירת כלים חדשים להון סיכון להשקעות במפעלים חדשים, במפעלים צעירים בתהליך "המראה" ובמחקר ופיתוח. המשך הסיוע הקיים באמצעות החוק לעידוד השקעות הון תוך כדי התאמתו ליעדי הגידול ביצוא ובתעסוקה. סיוע להקמת תשתית לתעשייה באיזורי פיתוח, תמריצי מס להגדלת הצבירה הפנימית במפעלים וסיוע בגיוס השקעות מחו"ל.
 - ◆ הגדלת הסיוע הממשלתי להכשרה מקצועית.
 - ◆ הגדלת הסיוע הממשלתי ליצואנים.
 - ◆ סיוע להקמת מפעלים באיזורי הפיתוח ובמגזר הערבי והדרוזי.

תיירות

- ◆ העבודה רואה בתעשיית התיירות מרכיב מרכזי בכלכלתה של ישראל. לכן תפעל העבודה להרחבת ההשקעות בענף התיירות ולגידול התשתית התיירותית ולשיפורת.
- ◆ יושם דגש על קידום מערך הפרסום והשיווק של מוצרי התיירות הישראלים ברחבי העולם.
- ◆ ממשלה בהנהגת העבודה תבחן מחדש את מדיניות התעופה הקשורה לענף התיירות, במגמה להסיר את המגבלות המכבידות על הרחבת פעילותו של ענף התיירות.

ענפי תשתית

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לחיסול הפיגור בחשקעות בתשתית שנוצר בתקופת ממשלת הליכוד, להרחבת התשתית המתבקשת מהרחבת הפעילות הנובעת מגל העלייה, ולהפעלה מנהלית ותכנונית יעילה כך שתובטח פעילות סדירה של ענפי התשתית (על "תחבורה" ראה להלן, בנפרד).

מדיניות חברתית

יעדי המדיניות החברתית יהיו:

- ◆ חיסול מירבי של העוני והמצוקות האישיות.
- ◆ תעסוקה ופרנסה לכל דורש (ראה לעיל).
- ◆ קליטה חברתית של גלי העלייה.
- ◆ צמצום פערים חברתיים בהתייחס לקבוצות הכנסה, איזורים גיאוגרפיים, נשים וגברים וקבוצות מוצא.
- ◆ הבטחת מתן שירותים יעילים בכל השירותים החברתיים תוך מתן אפשרות בחירה. העבודה דוגלת במתן שירותים חברתיים אוניברסליים ושוללת גישה המגבילה את מתן השירותים הממלכתיים לעניים בלבד.
- ◆ יש לאפשר ריבוי ספקים של שירותים ולהשיג יעילות על-ידי תחרות במסגרת החוק, ובלבד שחופש הבחירה של נותן השירותים לא יהפוך כלי ליצירת מדינת רווחה לעשירים ולפגיעה בשכבות מעוטות יכולת.

עיקר השרותים על פי חוק לכל

החלוקה בין השרותים הניתנים לכל האזרחים על פי חוק ובין השרותים הניתנים בתשלום על יסוד פרוגרסיבי חייבת להיות כזו, שהשרותים הניתנים לכל על פי חוק יהוו את עיקר השרותים, ורק חלקם הקטן יבוסס על תשלום. גם במסגרת מדיניות אוניברסלית - סל שירותים לכל האזרחים על פי חוק - יש מקום, על פי המצב הכלכלי והצרכים החברתיים, לתת שירותים מיוחדים לאנשים במצוקה

ולילדים קשי הסתגלות.

ממשלה בראשות העבודה תבטל את הנסיגה של הליכוד ממתן שירותים חברתיים ברמה נאותה, דבר היוצר פער חמור בין בעלי יכולת ובין מיעוטי יכולת, וגורם להקמת מערכות מקבילות כגון: חינוך אכזר, רפואה שחורה, משטרה פרטית וגובים פרטיים.

שוויוניות בצד מצויינות והעדפה חיובית.

ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להבטחת עידוד וטיפול המצויינות תוך הגברת האינטגרציה והשווייניות במתן הזדמנות לפרט לצאת ממעגל המצוקה ולהגיע להשגיות כלכלית וחברתית.

העבודה תומכת בהנהגת מדיניות של העדפה חיובית להשגת שוויון של אוכלוסיות הראויות לעידוד ולצמצום פערים חברתיים מטעמים של גובה הכנסה לפי מיקום גאוגרפי, ארצות מוצא או מין.

ביטוח בריאות ממלכתי

הממשלה, בראשות העבודה, תיזום חקיקת חוק ביטוח בריאות ממלכתי אשר יבטיח סל שירותי בריאות לכלל האוכלוסיה, באמצעות קופות חולים ציבוריות, אשר יעמדו בכללים הקבועים בחוק.

פנסיה ממלכתית

הממשלה תיזום חוק פנסיה אשר יחייב שכירים ועצמאיים להיות חברים בקופת פנסיה לפי בחירתם, כפרטים או כקבוצות. קופות הפנסיה ינוהלו בפיקוח ממשלתי להקטנת רמת הסיכון בקרנות. במעבר למימוש חוק הפנסיה יובטחו זכויותיהם של כל החברים בקרנות הקיימות.

ביטוח לאומי

- ◆ העבודה רואה בביטוח הלאומי אחד המכשירים החשובים של המדינה לשמירה על הביטחון הכלכלי והחברתי של כלל האוכלוסיה העובדת ותעשה כמיטב יכולתה לשפרו ולחזקו.
- ◆ לא יוטלו מיסים על קצבאות הביטוח הלאומי.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל להכרה בעקרת הבית כאשה עובדת לכל דבר ולהשוואת מעמדה לזה של שאר המבוטחים בביטוח לאומי.

קצבאות ילדים

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לשמירה על קצבאות הילדים כמכשיר מרכזי של המדינה להבטחה והשלמה של ההכנסה של כל המשפחות עם ילדים בישראל, באמצעות חקיקה, במיוחד במשפחות חד הוריות.

- ◆ ממשלת העבודה תחיל מערכת תשלום קצבאות הילדים על כל המשפחות ללא החלת מבחן הכנסה, ותפעל להחזיר מענק קצבאות הילדים למשפחות צעירות עם ילד אחד עד שלושה ילדים שלהן הקצבה שבוטלה ונשחקה בשנים האחרונות.
- ◆ בכפוף ליכולת התקציבית, תבחן הצעה לשלם קצבת הילדים עבור ילדים המשרתים בשרות צבאי סדיר ועד לתום תקופת השירות.

קצבאות נכות

- ◆ ממשיכה בראשות העבודה תפעל לשמירה על קצבאות הנכים והתוכניות הקיימות לרווחתן של קבוצות הנכים השונות במסגרת הביטוח הלאומי (ראה להלן: "נכים").

עלייה וקליטה

עיקר קיומה ותכליתה של מדינת ישראל כבית לעם היהודי היא העלייה. עצירת העלייה היא אחד המחדלים החמורים ביותר של הליכוד ושותפיו. כישלון הליכוד - באי יצירת מקומות תעסוקה. ממשלה בראשות העבודה תיתן עדיפות לאומית עליונה להבטחת תעסוקה הולמת לכל. לשם השגת מטרה זו:

- ◆ התמיכה במובטלים תוסב, במידת האפשר, לתמיכה בעובדים במערכות הייצור.
 - ◆ תופעל מדיניות המצמצמת העסקת עובדים בשכר זול וללא תנאים סוציאליים.
 - ◆ יקודם, בטווח המיידי, ביצוע פרויקטים לאומיים חיוניים עתירי עבודה וידע התואמים את השכלתם והכשרתם של העולים, במגמה לספק תעסוקה מיידית לרבבות עולים.
 - ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תגדיל באופן משמעותי את מלגות הקיום לסטודנטים עולים ותפעל למתן סיוע הולם במימון שכר הלימוד.
 - ◆ הממשלה תבטיח ביטוח רפואי מלא באחת מקופות החולים לכל עולה מעל גיל 60 ללא הגבלת זמן, ללא מגבלות רפואיות וללא תקופת מבחן. עולה בעל הכנסה ישתתף בעלות הביטוח על פי המקובל.
 - ◆ המוסד לביטוח לאומי יבטיח כי העולה ייכנס לזכויות הביטוח הלאומי על כל ענפיו מיד עם עלייתו, על חשבון הממשלה, ובמיוחד: קצבאות זיקנה, שארים, נכות, הבטחת והשלמת הכנסה.
 - ◆ תאושר ותופעל לאלתר, תכנית גימלאות מיוחדת לעולים, המבטיחה פנסיה גם לעובדים שלא הספיקו להשלים 10 שנות עבודה.
- הממשלה תשלם לעולה חלק מזכויות הפנסיה שרכש בעת עבודתו בחו"ל, כהשלמה לזכויות שירכוש בשנות עבודתו בישראל. כמו כן, תרכוש הממשלה זכויות פנסיה

- ◆ לעולה עבור התקופה מיום עלייתו ועד כניסתו לעבודה קבועה.
- ◆ העבודה תיאבק למען סיוע למשפחות עולים חד-הוריות, במסגרות לימודים ללא תשלום עד השעה 16:00 בהכשרה מקצועית לראש המשפחה כדי להבטיח מקורות פרנסה וניהול חיים עצמאי.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל לקביעת קריטריונים שיסייעו למשפחות עולים חד-הוריות לקבל שיכון, באמצעות הסדרי תשלום מיוחדים של המשכנתאות, בהתחשב במצב הכלכלי.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תהדק את שיתוף הפעולה עם הסוכנות היהודית, שהצליחה לארגן את מפעל העלייה.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תקים רשות משותפת לעלייה וקליטה בהנהגתם של ראש הממשלה ויורש הנהלת הסוכנות.
- ◆ תקציבים לקליטה יועברו ישירות לרשויות המקומיות שיעסקו בקליטה חברתית.

ציונות והעם היהודי

- ביצורה של מדינת ישראל, חיזוק זיקת התפוצות אליה ושמירת זהותן היהודית, עומדים ביסוד השקפתה הציונית של העבודה. לשם הגשמתן, תפעל ממשלה בראשות העבודה:
 - ◆ לעידוד העלייה כפתרון להמשך הקיום היהודי הלאומי.
 - ◆ להגברת החינוך היהודי-ציוני, ברוח השקפת עולמה, על ידי עידוד הקמת מסגרות חינוכיות ופיתוח תכניות לימוד, המדגישות את מורשתה ודרכה של העבודה בציונות ובבניין הארץ.
 - ◆ להקמת מסגרות משותפות למדינה וליהדות העולם - בתחומי המחקר והפיתוח, שיתבססו על הידע של העולים ושל ישראלים חוזרים ועל משאבים ותשומות של משקיעים מהגולה.
 - ◆ לחיזוק ציוניותה של החברה הישראלית, באמצעות טיפוח ערך ההתנדבות האישית לקליטת העלייה, הגשמת עקרונות מגילת העצמאות, והנחלת תודעת השותפות בין ישראל ליהודי התפוצות.
 - ◆ העבודה תיפעל להשגת יהעדים הנייל תוך שמירה מירבית על זכויות שוות לערבים, לדרוזים ולצ'רקסים במדינת-ישראל ושילובם המלא בחיי המדינה, השייכת לכל אורחיה.

השלטון המקומי

ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לשינוי ביחסי הגומלין בין השלטון המרכזי לשלטון המקומי:

- ◆ מעמדו וסמכויותיו של השלטון המקומי יורחבו.
- ◆ לרשויות המקומיות יובטחו מקורות מימון הדרושים למילוי תפקידיהן בכדי למנוע הסתבכויות כספיות. מערכות החינוך והרווחה יפעלו כמערכות תקציביות ומנהליות אוטונומיות.
- ◆ השלטון המקומי יהיה מופקד, באופן ישיר, על קליטת העלייה.
- ◆ האחריות על שירותי הרווחה תהיה בידי הרשויות המקומיות. הממשלה תספק מדיניות, משאבים ובקרה.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תנהיג קריטריונים קבועים, ברורים ושווים, לחלוקת המענקים של משרד הפנים ומשרד האוצר לשלטון המקומי תוך הקפדה על ביצועם.

מערכת הבריאות

קווי יסוד

מדיניות הליכוד מערערת את אחריות החברה והמדינה לקיום שירותי בריאות לכלל האזרחים. פוגעת, בראש ובראשונה, בשכבות החלשות ובמעמד הבינוני. ממשלה בראשות העבודה תבטיח קיום שירותי הרפואה הציבורית, תוך ביצוע רפורמות אירגוניות ומנהליות מתאימות.

חוק ביטוח בריאות

- ◆ העבודה תיזום חקיקה של חוק בריאות כולל אשר יסדיר את דרכי ההפעלה של מערכת הבריאות הציבורית בישראל ואשר יבטיח את זכויות החולה את המימון הציבורי הנדרש לקיום מערכת בריאות ציבורית שוויונית ברמה גבוהה ומתקדמת.
- ◆ החוק צריך להתבסס על העקרונות הבאים:
 - כל אזרח בישראל יהיה חייב בביטוח בריאות.
 - הביטוח ייעשה באמצעות קופות חולים ציבוריות, אשר יעמדו בכללים קבועים ואחידים הנדרשים בחוק.

ביטוח הבריאות יבטיח לאזרח את סל שירותי הבריאות שהוא זקוק להם למטרות ריפוי, מניעה בסיסית ושיקום. החוק יקבע את סל השירותים שחייבת הקופה להבטיח למבוטחיה. במסגרת זו יוגבלו גם זמני המתנה מירביים לפעולות רפואיות.

- ◆ תהיה תחרות חופשית בין הקופות ע"פ רמת השירות.
- ◆ מימון מערכת הבריאות יבוא משלושה מקורות: תשלומי מס חבר, תקציב המדינה ומס מקביל.

תונהג רפורמה ברפואה האשפוזית לפי הקווים שלהלן:

- ◆ בתי החולים הממשלתיים יתופעלו כגופים ציבוריים עצמאיים בתוקף חוק ("חוק המועצה לאשפוז").
- ◆ בתי החולים של קופת חולים הכללית יתופעלו במסגרת אוטונומיה ניהולית ואחריות כספית.
- ◆ תוקם רשות אשפוז שתהיה אחראית על מערכת האשפוז בישראל.
- ◆ קופות החולים תהיינה חופשיות להתקשר עם בתי החולים באזורם בהסכמים למתן שירותים.

הפעלת השרותים

- ◆ תפקיד הממשלה באמצעות משרד הבריאות לקבוע את מדיניות הבריאות בישראל.
- ◆ משרד הבריאות לא יעסוק במתן ישיר של שירותים רפואיים.
- ◆ משרד הבריאות יעביר את השירותים שהוא מספק כיום לאחריות והפעלה של קופות החולים.
- ◆ תיקבע המסגרת האיזורית כמודל הפעילות של מערכת הבריאות. בכל אזור יוכלו לפעול מספר בתי חולים, תוך תחרות הוגנת ביניהם. ינתן לאזרח חופש לבחור את בית החולים.
- ◆ מעמד האשה המבוטחת בקופות החולים השונות ישווה למעמד הגבר בזכויות ובתשלומים.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להורדת גיל בדיקת מי השפיר ל-35 לכלל הנשים ותעשה מאמץ לממן, לנשים הזקוקות לכך, את מלוא ההוצאות הכרוכות בטיפול פוריות.
- ◆ יחודש הסעיף הסוציאלי בחוק ההפלות.

שיכון

כללי

הבטחת שיכון נאות לאוכלוסיה הינה מהאתגרים החשובים איתם מתמודדת החברה בישראל ומתפקידה של כל ממשלה.

מדיניות בינוי ושיכון

- ◆ יש לרכז מאמץ לאומי בפעילות אנטי-מחזורית בענף הבניה ובייעול הבנייה והזולתה, ולפתח שיטת סיוע לרוכשי דירות, שתבטיח דיור נאות לכל האוכלוסיה בלי לייקר את הדירות.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לייצוב ענף הבנייה, על-ידי תיכנון עתודות הקרקע, פיתוח תשתיות לבנייה ומעורבות הממשלה בייזום הבנייה ובמימונה.
- ◆ יושם דגש על פתרונות דיור של הזוגות הצעירים ששרתו בצבא או בשרות הלאומי.
- ◆ ייבנו דירות שאפשר להגדילן כך שלא יהיה צורך להחליף דיור עם התרחבות המשפחה.
- ◆ יבנה דיור ציבורי - בעיקר עבור עולים - בקרבת איזורי תעשייה על מנת לאפשר מגורים סמוכים לתעשייה.

שיכון ותנאי סיוע

- ◆ כדי למנוע את שחיקת הסיוע שמקבלים הזכאים לדיור, ייקבעו כללי-סיוע חדשים שיבטיחו כי הסיוע שנותנת המדינה לזכאים יהיה צמוד למדד מחירי הדיור.
- ◆ הכללים האלה יבטיחו תנאים שווים ואחידים לכל הזכאים לסיוע זוגות צעירים, עולים וותיקים וההבחנות בין האזרחים יהיו על בסיס שיקולים חברתיים וכלכליים בלבד.
- ◆ כדי להזיל את מחירי הדיור לזכאים לרכישת דירה ראשונה יבוטל מס רכישה לגביהם על דירות ששיטחן נמוך מ-100 מ"ר.
- ◆ תבוטל, באופן מודרג, ההצמדה של המשכנתאות למדד יוקר המחיה ותיעשה פעולה להקלת המצוקה של נפגעי המשכנתאות.
- ◆ תבוטל, בחקיקה, הדרישה של הבנקים למשכנתאות להבאת ערבים לצורך קבלת הלוואה לדיור, תוך המצאת בטוחה אחרת להחזר ההלוואה.

בנייה להשכרה

- ◆ הממשלה בראשות העבודה תעודד ביצוע בנייה להשכרה כדי ליצור היצע משמעותי של סוג שיכון זה למי שידו אינה משגת לרכוש דירה או מעוניין בסוג דיור זה.
- ◆ עידוד הבנייה להשכרה יתבצע ע"י הקלות מס לגוף הבונה ו/או המשקיע ו/או השוכר, באמצעות שיעורי מס הכנסה ומע"מ מופחתים, דחיות בתשלום המסים, שיעורי פחת מוגדלים וזיכויי מס כנגד שכר-דירה. ההקלות האמורות יחולו רק על דירות ששטחן עד 100 מ"ר.

דת ומדינה

- מתוך הכרה כי מורשת היהדות קיימה את עם ישראל דרך כל נדודיו וגלויותיו והייתה גורם מכריע בחידוש זהותו הלאומית:
- ◆ העבודה, המחייבת את הקשר והזיקה ההדדיים בין מדינת ישראל ודת ישראל, סבורה כי יש להבטיח את אי תלותה של הדת בפוליטיקה ולנתקה מן המיקוח הפוליטי.
 - ◆ הפלוראליזם הדתי במדינת-ישראל יובטח על-ידי חוקה שתהיה מושתתת על עקרונות היסוד של מגילת העצמאות המבטיחה שוויון, סובלנות וחופש הבחירה.
 - ◆ העבודה מחייבת את סיעתה בכנסת להבטיח שכל חקיקה בנושאי דת תתבסס על הסכמה רחבה בעם.
 - ◆ העבודה מחייבת את נציגיה בכנסת להבטיח, גם בדרך של חקיקה אם יהיה צורך בכך, שכל צעיר וצעירה בגיל גיוס ישאו בעול הבטחון בשירות צבאי או בשירות לאומי. מפלגת העבודה מציינת את הניסיון המוצלח של ישיבות ההסדר בשילוב של לימוד תורה עם השירות בצה"ל ותפעל לחיוב כל בני הישיבות בגיל הגיוס לשרת בצה"ל, תוך התחשבות במסגרות הישיבתיות ובצרכים המיוחדים שלהם.
 - ◆ העבודה תפעל לכך שהמענק החודשי מטעם המדינה לתלמידי הישיבות לא יעלה על המענק החודשי לחייל המשרת בצה"ל.
 - ◆ מתוך הכרה כי על המדינה לספק את שירותי הדת וצרכיה לאזרחיה, תפעל ממשלה בראשות העבודה:
 - ◆ לשינוי המבנה וההרכב של המועצות הדתיות, כדי לתת ייצוג דמוקרטי לכל הזרמים והגוונים של החברה הישראלית היהודית, לרבות נשים.
 - ◆ להקפדה שמתן השירותים הדתיים יינתנו לכל הזרמים והגוונים של התושבים ללא השפעת זיקות פוליטיות או אחרות.

איכות הסביבה

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תשמור על איכות הסביבה, תפעל למנוע את זיהום המים והאוויר ותפעל לחיסול או לצמצום נזקים של מפגעים אקולוגיים שונים, של חומרים רעילים וקרינה גרעינית.
- ◆ הממשלה תורה לבדוק את ההשלכות הסביבתיות, טרם קבלת החלטות להקמת מפעלי תעשייה או שכונות מגורים, כדי שיינקטו האמצעים הדרושים למניעת זיהומים.
- ◆ הממשלה תעודד יוזמות של מחקר ופיתוח בנושא איכות הסביבה, תרחיב פעולות חינוך והסברה ותעודד את פעילות הרשויות הציבוריות המגיינות על איכות הסביבה.
- ◆ הממשלה תבחן מחדש את החקיקה בתחום איכות הסביבה, להשלמת החסר ולהקניית סמכויות ואמצעים למשרד לאיכות הסביבה ולרשויות המקומיות כדי לאכוף את החוקים והתקנות.
- ◆ הממשלה תכין ותבצע תכנית חירום לעצירת ההתדרדרות החמורה באיכות מי התהום ובמי הנחלים ותפעל להגדלת הניצול של מי השפכים, בשיטות מיחזור זולות.
- ◆ הממשלה תפעל למנוע או לצמצם פליטות גזים מזיקים לבריאות ממוקדי פליטה בתעשייה, בתחנות כוח, בתחבורה ובחקלאות. מפעלי תעשייה פטרוכימית או תעשייה מזהמת יוקמו באתרים מרוחקים ממרכזי אוכלוסייה.
- ◆ הממשלה תגביר את הפיקוח והאכיפה למניעת זיהום הים וחופי הרחצה ותנקוט ביוזמת חקיקה להבטיח שרחצה בחופי הים לא תפגע בבריאותם של המתרחצים.
- ◆ הממשלה תפעל לחקיקת חוק הגנה מקרינה.
- ◆ הממשלה תעשה מאמץ להסביר את הסכנה לבריאות מעישון.
- ◆ הממשלה תקפיד על ביצוע חוקים המחייבים את המזהמים לשאת בעלות ובהוצאות האיתור והשיקום של הזיהום.

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תחבורה

- ◆ העבודה אינה מוכנה להשלים עם ריבוי "הפקקים" והשיירות בכבישים ובדרכים ותעשה לפתרון מהיר של בעיות התחבורה.
- ◆ הממשלה תיתן עדיפות למלחמה בתאונות הדרכים ותקצה משאבים לספל בגורמים לתאונות המחרידות. הממשלה תחזק את המינהל לבטיחות בדרכים.

- ◆ הממשלה תפעל ליישום מסקנות ועדת החקירה הפרלמנטרית בנושא תאונות הדרכים.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להשלמת התכנון ולסלילה של עורקי תחבורה ראשיים במדינה.
- ◆ הממשלה תדאג לסלילת דרכי גישה לשובים יהודים, ערבים ודרוזים ברחבי המדינה לפי סדר עדיפויות שתקבע.
- ◆ הממשלה תפעל להקמת רשות תחבורה מרכזית לאזור גוש דן, שתנהל מערכת תחבורה משולבת ויעילה לרשויות המקומיות השונות וביניהן.
- ◆ הממשלה תפעל ליישום תכניות רכבת הפרברים, תוך שמירה על איכות הסביבה.
- ◆ הממשלה תבחן מחדש את פרויקט הרכבת לאילת.

תרבות

חוק לעידוד היצירה של תרבות ישראלית מקורית

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תיזום בכנסת הבאה, חוק לעידוד היצירה של תרבות מקורית ישראלית, למען הבטחת התנאים הנאותים לצמיחתה.
- החוק יכלול, בין היתר, הגנה על זכויות האמן היוצר והאמן המבצע; מחויבות המדינה לפיתוח ואחזקה של מוסדות תרבות ואמנות על בסיס חופש היצירה וההבעה; הענקת תמלוגים ומלגות לסופרים, אמנים ויוצרים, קידום ועידוד היזמה של מפיקים פרטיים בתחומי הקולנוע, התקשורת האלקטרונית והבמה.
- ◆ הממשלה תפעל למתן מעמד מיוחד והולם במערכת הממלכתית למועצה הציבורית לתרבות ולאמנות.

קידום הפעולה התרבותית במדינה

ממשלה בראשות העבודה תזרים משאבים נוספים לקידום הפעולה התרבותית במדינה; תבטיח תשתית איתנה למוסדות האמנות והתרבות בכל אזורי הארץ; תסייע לספריות הציבוריות ולמוזיאונים ולפעילות מגוונת של הנחלת הלשון העברית והשכלה לעם. תסייע לאמנים היוצרים ובמבצעים בתחום התרבותי והמקצועי.

קליטת אמנים ויוצרים עולים

העבודה תפעל לשילובם של היוצרים העולים במעגל העשייה התרבותית תוך עידוד וטיפוח תרומתם התרבותית הייחודית.

החינוך לאמנות

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להידוק הקשר בין מערכת התרבות והאמנות לבין משרד החינוך.
- ◆ ייעשה להחדרת החינוך לאמנות והחינוך לאסתטיקה ולטיפוחם החל מהגיל הרך.
- ◆ ממשלה ברשות העבודה תפעל לעידוד היצירה הישראלית המקומית בתחומי הקולנוע והטלוויזיה.

עידוד התרבות הספרדית-מזרחית

- ◆ העבודה תפעל לטיפוח משקלה של מורשת התרבות הספרדית-מזרחית ולמיזוגה בתרבות הישראלית הכוללת. לפיכך, תעשה העבודה לעידוד היצירה התרבותית המזרחית, על היבטיה ותחומיה השונים, במחזאות, בסיפורת, במסאות, בשירה ובזמר וע"י סיוע ליוצריהם.
- ◆ העבודה תעשה למען חשיפתה הראוייה של יצירה תרבותית זו בתקשורת הכתובה, המשודרת והאלקטרונית, למען חזק את תרומתה להווייה התרבותית בישראל.

חברת העובדים וההסתדרות

- ◆ באמצעות שינוי צורת הארגון ומבנה הבעלות, עוברת חברת העובדים תהליך שינוי, המיועד להבריא את המפעלים מבחינה כלכלית ופיננסית, לחזק את הניהול המקצועי ולמנוע תלותו בגורמים מפלגתיים-פוליטיים. חלק מרכזי בתהליך השינוי הוא ביזור הניהול וריכוז הפיקוח שהעתיק, וימשיך להעתיק, את עיקר הסמכות והאחריות לניהול וביצוע אל רמת המפעל.
- ◆ השינוי במבנה "חברת העובדים" ייעשה ע"י הקמת חברת אחזקות שתרכז את כל אחזקותיה של "חברת העובדים" במשק הציבורי. חברת האחזקות תפעל על בסיס עסקי ושיקול כלכלי אשר מטרתו היא העלאת ערך החברות הבנות. הצלחתן הכלכלית של החברות תהיה הבסיס לתרומתן להשקעות במשק, הגברת התעסוקה לחברה בישראל. כל מועצות המנהלים והמנהלים בחברת האחזקות ובנותיה יתמנו על סמך כישורים מקצועיים ויחויבו לקיים עצמאות, אי תלות בשיקול דעתם ובפעילותם ולפעול לקידום מטרות החברות אותם הם מנהלים. במסמכי ההקמה של חברת האחזקות יובטחו העקרונות הנזכרים לעיל.
- ◆ צורת הניהול ומבנה הבעלות של חברת האחזקות ייבחנו בהמשך להקמת החברה והפעלתה. בעקבות הניסיון שיצטבר במשך תקופת הפעלת חברת האחזקות

- תתבקש הוועידה השישית של המפלגה להכריע בענין הבעלות, כולל הזיקה בין ההסתדרות ו"חברת העובדים" (חברת האחזקות).
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך לראות בהסתדרות הכללית תנועה חברתית המייצגת את העובדים בישראל והמגינה על זכויותיהם תוך אחריות לאומית ותרומה לבניית חברה צודקת יותר, על בסיס ערכי העבודה והתמורה לעבודה.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לחידוש האמנה בין הממשלה, ההסתדרות והמעסיקים.
- ◆ הממשלה תשמור על עקרון חופש המאבק המקצועי, תוך שמירה על אבטחת שירותים חיוניים. הממשלה תתמוך באיגוד המקצועי בהסתדרות הכללית ובמאבקו להשוואת הישגי העובדים בישראל לאלה שהושגו במדינות השוק האירופי תוך גידול ברמת התפוקה, השכר ושיפור תנאי העבודה והרווחה. כן תתמוך הממשלה במאבקו של האיגוד המקצועי לקיומה של עבודה מאורגנת במשק הישראלי.
- ◆ העבודה תמשיך לראות בקואופרציה היצרנית והשיווקית מכשיר חשוב להבטחת תעסוקה, לגיוס הון, לצמיחה כלכלית ולקליטת עולים חדשים.

עיירות פיתוח

- ממשלה בראשות העבודה תעניק עדיפות לביסוסן ולפיתוחן של עיירות הפיתוח ע"י הפעלת מדיניות תמריצים מדורגת לכל אזורי הפיתוח.
- ◆ יצירת מקומות תעסוקה לבני העיירות ולעולים החדשים ע"י הפנייה מכוונת של מפעלים עתירי ידע וטכנולוגיה, הקצאת קרקע ליוזמים, והעברה מואצת של מפעלי תשתית לאומיים, או שלוחותיהם, לאזורי הפיתוח, והקמת פארקים תעשייתיים אזוריים.
- ◆ שיפור מהפכני באמצעי תעבורה רכבת ישראל, רשת כבישים, קוי תעופה, שיקצרו משמעותית את הזמן מהמרכז וישפרו את הנגישות לשירותיו.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להקמת מועצה כלכלית-חברתית, בה יכהנו נציגי ממשלה, גופים כלכליים רלבנטיים וראשי ערי-פיתוח שתפעל בכל הרמות - לפיתוח כלכלי, תעסוקתי, חינוכי וחברתי של ערי הפיתוח עד להגעתן לכושר נשיאה עצמית.

שכונות

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לטיפול השכונות בערים באמצעות העלאת איכות החיים הפיסית והתרבותית בהן, על ידי הבטחת סל שירותים שכונתי העונה על צרכי החינוך, הבריאות, הרווחה ותרבות הפנאי.
- ◆ העבודה רואה בשיתוף חברי הקהילה השכונתית, הוותיקה והחדשה, בתהליך התכנון, הביצוע והבקרה של הפעולות הנוגעות לקהילה, אמצעי ודרך לחיזוק יכולת הניהול העצמי של התושבים.
- ◆ העבודה תעודד פיתוח אמצעי התקשורת הקהילתית המודרנית לשם פיתוח פוטנציאל היצירה השכונתי המקומי.

התיישבות וחקלאות

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תראה בהתיישבות הקיבוצית והמושבית מופת חלוצי באורח החיים ובפריסת האוכלוסיה ותפעל לפיתוחה.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תאבק להשגת אמנה לאומית חדשה לחקלאות, להבטחת התכנון, לשמירה על שותפויות מרצון, להבטחת אמצעי הייצור החקלאי ולמחקר ופיתוח. האמנה תיעשה תוך שיתוף של החקלאים, הציבור הרחב, הכנסת והממשלה.
- ◆ כדי להבטיח את יציבותה ופיתוחה של החקלאות בישראל, ואת כושר תחרותה בשווקי העולם, תוך שמירה וניצול מושכל של אמצעי הייצור, תפעל הממשלה:
 - * לקביעת מחיר אחיד למים, לסוגיהם, לחקלאות * ייעשה מאמץ לאומי משולב להגדלת כמות המים הנצילה לחקלאות * דאגה למסגרות ברורות לתכנון ולאמצעים להגדלת היצוא החקלאי * לייעול מועצות הייצור ואיחודן * להקצאת אמצעים למחקר כאחוז קבוע מהתל"ג החקלאי ושיתוף החקלאים בקביעת מדיניות המחקר * להעמדת מערכת אשראי התואמת את צרכי המשק החקלאי.
- ◆ הממשלה תפעל לקידום ולפיתוח של איזורי הפריפריה, תוך מתן העדפה בתקציבי ממשלה להתיישבות הצעירה לשם פיתוח תשתית, חינוך ותעסוקה.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תתמוך במתיישבי בקעת הירדן והגולן, ובחיזוק ההתיישבות בכל הגולן ובבקעת הירדן. הקמת התיישבות חדשה תובא לאישור הסיעה והלשכה.

מעמד האשה

העבודה מחוייבת למימוש השוויון בין המינים ותפעל להשגתו בכל התחומים ובכל מגזרי החברה הישראלית באמצעות: מערכת החינוך על כל רמותיה ושלביה, לרבות בצבא, בתקשורת לסוגיה, בחקיקה.

כדי לקדם מטרה זו תפעל ממשלת העבודה:

- ◆ להכללתן של נשים במוקדי הכרעה ולהגדלת ייצוגן בכל מערכות השלטון.
- ◆ העבודה תכלול נשים בממשלה בראשותה, או שבה תהיה שותפה.
- ◆ לזכויות שוות לעבודה לנשים ולגברים, תוך העדפה זמנית מכוונת לנשים, לצורך קידומן בתפקידי ניהול.
- ◆ השוואה גמורה של שכר הנשים לשכר הגברים.
- ◆ מתן זכות לחישוב נפרד לבן זוג לגבי מקור הכנסה שהוא.
- ◆ להגשמת עקרונות הנובעים ממעמד אישי ומשפחה: הכרה בזכות לנישואין כזכות בסיסית לכל איש ואשה, שאינה ניתנת להגבלה מטעמי דת, גזע, לאום.
- ◆ פעולה נמרצת למציאת פתרונות לבעיות בנושאים דוגמת חליצה, עגינות, מנועי חיתון והפקעת נישואין וגרושין במסגרת ההלכה, תוך התאמה לאורח החיים המודרני, או הסדרת הנושא בחקיקה, אם לא יימצאו פתרונות כאלה.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תתנגד להצעות להרחבת סמכויות בתי הדין הרבניים או לצמצום פיקוח בגייץ עליהם.
- ◆ יישום מלא של החוק למניעת אלימות במשפחה.
- ◆ הקמת רשות ממלכתית מיוחדת ורב תחומית אשר תטפל במשולב, באופן יסודי וכולל בחיסול התופעה. הקצאת משאבים מוגברת לטיפול בבעיה במסגרת השירותים החברתיים-קהילתיים.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להרחבת מערכות השירותים למשפחה העובדת: ובכללן מעונות יום והנהגת מסלול של יום לימודים ארוך בכל מוסדות החינוך.

הגימלאים והאזרחים הוותיקים

מתוך הכרה בתרומתם וזכויותיהם של הגימלאים והאזרחים הוותיקים, תעלה העבודה את צרכיהם ומעמדם בסולם העדיפויות הלאומי, תפעל לשיפור מצבם הכלכלי ולשילובם בכל מערכות החיים והחברה, ולהבטחת יחסי שיוויון וכיבוד הדדי בין הדורות.

עיקרי היעדים לעתיד

- ◆ העבודה תיזום חקיקת חוק ביטוח פנסיה ממלכתי ברוח עקרונותיה.
- ◆ העבודה תתנגד, חד משמעית (באמצעות חקיקה), לשילוב הפנסיה עם הביטוח הלאומי, להטלת כל מס על הקיצבאות, לפגיעה כלשהי בזכויות הקיימות של הגימלאים, ותפעל לעדכון הגימלאות ולהכללת מרכיבי שכר נוספים בחישובי הפנסיה.
- ◆ העבודה תעמוד על יישום מלא של חוק האזרחים הוותיקים ברוח כוונת המחוקק, לרבות חיזוק מעמד הסתדרות הגימלאים, שהוכרה בחוק כגוף היציג של הגימלאים.
- ◆ העבודה תדאג להרחבת תרבות הפנאי של הגימלאי, להקמת בתי אבות, מעדוני גימלאים ומרכזי יום, בסיוע מימון ממלכתי.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תדאג להרחבת חוק ביטוח סיעוד, והמסגרות של המסדות הסיעודיים, ולהגברת הפיקוח עליהם.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל להבטחת זכויות העולה הקשיש.
- ◆ יישמר הפטור ממס על הכנסה מפנסיה.
- ◆ יורחבו ההנחות לגימלאים בשירותים הציבוריים, הממלכתיים והעירוניים.

ערביי-ישראל

הגשמת השוויון

- ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לסגירת פערים ומחיצות בין היישוב היהודי לערבי במדינה בתחומים הבאים:
- חינוך, תעשייה ומלאכה, חקלאות, נוער וצעירים, שירותי בריאות בישובים הערבים, שילוב המשכילים, שלטון מקומי, שיכון ודת.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להגברת ההבנה והסובלנות בין יהודים לערבים, למען סגירת פערים ולפתרון בעיות יסודיות בסקטור הערבי על-ידי דאגה לפתרון

- בעיית הקרקעות, פיתוח משאבים ותשתיות ביישוב הערבי למען יצירת מקורות תעסוקה ועידוד שותפויות עסקיות, לחלוקה צודקת של מכסות מים, והבטחה באמצעות חקיקה, של מכסות ייצור.
- ◆ הקצאה מכוונת של תקציבים לפיתוח מואץ של התשתית החינוכית הפיסית, ולשם טיפוח איכות ההוראה במסגרות החינוך הפורמאליות והבלתי פורמאליות.
- ◆ עידוד רכישת השכלה גבוהה, באמצעות מלגות קיום ושכר לימוד, במגמה לשלב בוגרים, על פי כישוריהם, בכל מוסדות המדינה.
- ◆ מאמץ לפתרון מצוקת דיור, באמצעות האצת אישור תכניות מתאר, מתן היתרי בנייה, ויצירת אפשרות לרכישת קרקעות.

מימוש הייצוג

- העבודה תפעל לשילובם המלא של הערבים בחיי החברה. אחת הדרכים לכך היא מתן ייצוג הולם בכל תחומי הפעילות הציבורית.
- ◆ יש לשלב משכילים, בוגרי אוניברסיטאות ומוסדות השכלה גבוהים אחרים לקחת חלק בחיים הציבוריים, ולאפשר להם לתפוס את מקומם, בכל מוסדות החיים, הן הפוליטיים והן הכלכליים החברתיים והתרבותיים.

חינוך

הממשלה בראשות העבודה תגדיל את המשאבים המיועדים להעמקת החינוך בקרב היישוב הערבי ותשלים את הקמת המבנים, כתות הלימוד, המעבדות וספריות בבתי הספר. היא תפתח מתקני ספורט ומפעלי תרבות אמנות, במגמה לסגור את הפערים ברמת החינוך, במבנים ובציוד בין היישוב היהודי והיישוב הערבי.

שלטון מקומי

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך להקים רשויות מקומיות ביישובים הראויים לכך מבחינת מספר התושבים. יש לעודד הקמת רשויות איזוריות משותפות ליישובים יהודים וערבים שאין בהם רשות מקומית.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל למען השוואת התקציבים והתקנים של הרשויות הערביות, הדרוזיות והבדואיות, לאלו של הרשויות היהודיות.
- הממשלה תעודד את הרשויות המקומיות הערביות להכנת תוכניות מתאר ע"י הקצאת תקציבים מתאימים וקרקעות.

דת

- ◆ העבודה תפעל לתיקון החוק שהגדיר את רכוש המוסלמי כרכוש נפקדים (כפי שלא נהגה ברכוש של אף עדה אחרת) ותחזיר לעדה המוסלמית את רכושה; כולל פיצויים על הרכוש שנגרע מהם מאז 1948, כאשר המדינה שימשה אפוטרופוס של נכסי הווקף המוסלמי. רכוש העדה המוסלמית ינוהל באורח עצמאי ובפיקוח המדינה, כפי שרכושן של עדות המיעוטים האחרות מתנהל ע"י ראשיהן או נבחריהן.

בדואים

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל למען מציאת פתרון הולם לבעיית הקרקעות של הבדואים בנגב.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תעשה לשילובם של הצעירים הבדואים במוסדות השלטון.
- ◆ ממשלת העבודה תעשה למען הפניית משאבים לפיתוח העיירות הבדואיות, ולקידום רמת-החיים בקרב הבדואים ושיפור איכותם בתחומי החינוך, הבריאות, והשיכון.

הדרוזים בישראל

- ◆ העדה הדרוזית, בת הברית של העם היהודי ושותפתו בנשיאה בעול הביטחון, ראוייה למימוש הלכה למעשה, של שוויון זכויות מלא וגמור במדינת ישראל.
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תחתור להשגת יעד זה באמצעות:
 - ◆ השוואה לאלתר של תנאי היושבים הדרוזיים לאלה של עיירות הפיתוח.
 - ◆ הקצאה מיוחדת של תקציבי ממשלה במטרה לפתור באופן יסודי, מהיר, ולטווח ארוך את בעיות התשתית של העיירה הדרוזית בחינוך, בבנייה, בתעשייה, בחקלאות, בתיירות ובמסחר.
 - ◆ פתיחת כל חילות הצבא בפני הצעיר הדרוזי המתגייס על פי המבחנים הביטחוניים, המוחלים על הכל.
 - ◆ קידום של הקצינים הדרוזים, בהתאם לכישוריהם וליכולתם, לדרגות ולתפקידים בכירים.
 - ◆ סיוע לחיילים הדרוזים המשוחררים בקרקע לדיר, במשכנתאות ובתעסוקה, תוך מאמץ לקליטת קצינים דרוזים משוחררים ואקדמאים בדרגים בכירים של המנגנון הממשלתי.

מועצות מקומיות

- ◆ יש לפעול ליושום מידי של החלטות הממשלה והכנסת, להשוואת תנאיהם של היישובים הדרוזים, לאלה של עיירות הפיתוח.
- ◆ העבודה תתמוך בחוק השוויון לדרוזים, ותפעל בכנסת לקבלתו בהקדם.

החיילים המשוחררים והדור הצעיר

- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תעשה לפתיחת שערי מוסדות ההשכלה הגבוהה ובתי הספר המקצועיים בפני הצעירים המעוניינים ללמוד (ראה פרק חינוך גבוה ומדע).
- ◆ הממשלה תפעל באופן נמרץ ליצירת מקומות תעסוקה לצעירים, ליכולת הצעירים להתפרנס בכבוד ולמימוש זכותם לדיוור (ראה בפרקים על "תעסוקה והכשרה מקצועית" ו"שיכון").
- ◆ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תחוקק חוק החיילים המשוחררים שיבטיח זכויות לכל חייל משוחרר בתחומי התעסוקה, הדיוור, ההשכלה וההכשרה המקצועית. חוק זה שואף להבטיח:
 - * מתן עדיפות לחיילים המשוחררים בצעדיהם הראשונים לאחר השחרור ולמנוע ירידתם מהארץ.
 - * אפשרויות מעשיות לביסוס מצבם הכלכלי, כדי לחזק את מעמדם החברתי ולהבטיח עתידם במדינה.
 - * הקמת מכשיר כספי שיבטיח בתוקף הוראות החוק את יכולת המימוש של זכויות החייל המשוחרר.
 - * זכותו של חייל משוחרר לחזור למקום העבודה שבו עבד לפני גיוסו.
 - * סיוע לחייל משוחרר בהשתלמות מקצועית ובהשלמת לימודי הבגרות.

המגזר העסקי והעצמאיים

- ממשלה בראשות העבודה תראה במגזר העסקי ובעצמאיים כגורמים משמעותיים במאמץ לחילוץ המשק מהמשבר ולחידוש הצמיחה, ותפעל להגשמת היעדים הבאים:
- ◆ על הכנסה שווה בתנאים שווים יחול מס שווה. העבודה תפעל בתכנית רב-שנתית לבטול האפליות הקיימות לגבי המגזר העסקי והעצמאיים.
 - ◆ עידוד יוזמות עסקיות ויוזמות לפתיחת עסקים קטנים שירחיבו את התשתית הקיימת. הפעלת חוק המועצה לעסקים קטנים, אותו יזמה העבודה.
 - ◆ לצמצום הדרגתי ומשמעותי של נטל המסים להורדת שערי המכס ומס קנייה, כמפורט לעיל בפרק "חברה וכלכלה", כדי לעודד את הרצון לעבוד ולהשקיע.
 - ◆ הגדלת האמון של המערכת הממשלתית בבעל העסק הקטן והבינוני.
 - ◆ ריפורמה בחוק הביטוח הלאומי, על מנת לבטל את האפליות הקיימות בחוק.
 - ◆ הכרה בתנאים הסוציאליים לעצמאיים לצרכי מס.
 - ◆ הסרת המגבלות על הקשרים הפיננסיים והעסקיים עם חו"ל במגמה לעודד פיתוח קשרים בינלאומיים.
 - ◆ המשך הפרטת חברות ממשלתיות וצמצום מעורבות הממשלה במשק ככל האפשר (ראה פרק: חברה וכלכלה).

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נכים ומוגבלים

- ממשלה בראשות העבודה תדאג לאנשים הסובלים מהגבלות פיזיות, נכות או פיגור, במגמה לאפשר להם לחיות ולפעול כאדם בריא ועצמאי ולא להיות לנטל על המשפחה והחברה. כדי להשיג מטרה זו תפעל העבודה:
- ◆ ליישום חוק החינוך המיוחד.
 - ◆ לשיפור החקיקה הקיימת בתחום הטיפול באזרח המוגבל כדי לשלבו בקהילה.
 - ◆ התחשבות בבני אדם עם מוגבלויות בעת תכנון וחלוקת דיור, לרבות מתן סיוע לדיור והסרת מכשלות לשילוב האדם המוגבל במגורים בקהילה.
 - ◆ לחקיקה המונעת אפלייתו של אדם מוגבל בתחום השירותים הניתנים לכלל האוכלוסייה, לרבות שירותי תרבות ופנאי הניתנים על-ידי גופים פרטיים, הבטחת נגישות לנכים לכל בניין ציבורי.
 - ◆ מתן הזדמנות לבני אדם מוגבלים להשתלב במעגל העבודה, לפי יכולתם, הן במסגרות ממלכתיות וציבוריות והן במסגרות פרטיות.

- ◆ להבטיח במידת האפשר את הערך הריאלי של קיצבאות הנכים הנשחקות.
- ◆ העבודה תמנע שינוי לרעה בזכויות הנכים והמוגבלים.

תקשורת

- העבודה רואה בפיתוח רשת תקשורת מתקדמת תשתית לאומית חשובה לקידום הכלכלה, התרבות, ההשכלה והחברה בישראל.
- ◆ יושלם פיתוחו ושיגורו של לוויין התקשורת הישראלי.
- ◆ תינתן עדיפות בפיתוח התשתיות והשירותים לאזורי הפריפריה.
- ◆ העבודה תיזום חקיקה להקמת רשות לאומית לתקשורת שתשנה בהדרגה את המבנה הנוכחי של התקשורת האלקטרונית בישראל ותפחית את התערבות הממשלה במדיניות ובביצוע השידורים.
- ◆ העבודה רואה בגליץ נכס תקשורתי לאומי. קיומה יובטח במסגרת ציבורית ממלכתית.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל לשילוב החינוך לצריכת תקשורת והקניית מיומנויות להבנתה במסגרת מערכת החינוך הפורמאלי.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל להרחבתה ולביסוסה של רשת הטלוויזיה הלימודית לבתי הספר, ולהשכלת מבוגרים, תוך שימת דגש על צרכי קליטת העלייה.
- ◆ העבודה רואה את הזכות לדעת ואת חופש הביטוי כזכויות יסוד שמימושן יובטח על ידי עתונות חופשית ומגוונת ואמצעי תקשורת לא מונופליסטים.
- ◆ העבודה תפעל לעגן את חופש העיתונות וחופש הביטוי תוך שמירת זכויות הפרט, בחוקת המדינה.

ספורט

- מפלגת העבודה רואה בחינוך הגופני ובספורט אמצעי לשיפור איכות חייו, רווחתו, בריאותו וחוסנו של האזרח ובילוי מועיל ומהנה לשעות הפנאי. ולכן:
- ◆ יש להרחיב הספורט העממי באזורי המגורים, בהתיישבות העובדת, במקומות העבודה ובמסגרות החינוך הפורמאלי והבלתי פורמאלי.
- ◆ לפעול לחיזוק וקידום הספורט ההישגי והתחרותי.
- ◆ להוסיף שעות חינוך גופני במערכת הלימודים.

מצע המפלגה

♦ יש להקצות משאבים ממלכתיים כספיים להתאחדויות ולאגודות הספורט, לפיתוח הספורט התחרותי וההישגי ולתמיכה בספורטאי ההישגי. כמו כן יש להקצות אמצעים ממלכתיים לקליטת מאמנים וספורטאים עולים בכל המסגרות.

העבודה עומדת לרשות ולשירות האדם, האזרח והמדינה.

סיון תשנ"ב
יוני 1992



והעבודה

**מצע
מפלגת העבודה
לכנסת ה-14**

1996 התשנ"ו
אגף הסברה ותקשורת

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מבוא

הכנסת ה-14 תנהיג את ישראל אל סף המאחז הבאה, אל שנת האלפיים. בבחירות לכנסת ה-14 יתבקש העם להכריע האם לתת מנדט לראש הממשלה שמעון פרס ולמפלגת העבודה להמשיך במדיניות השלום והבטחון, היציבות והשגשוג הכלכלי והרווחה החברתית באזורנו או לאפשר לחולקים על מדיניות העבודה וראשה, להרוס את אושיות השלום שבנו עד כה, ולהחזיר, חלילה, את העם והמדינה למועגל המלחמות והאינתיפאדה!

העבודה וראשה מאמינים שהשלום האמיתי והמלא באזורנו הינו בהישג ידנו וכי בניווט נכון ונכון נוכל לממש את השלום באזורנו במרוצת ארבע השנים שונתרו עד לשנת אלפיים.

העבודה וראשה מאמינים שהשלום מצד אחד ועוצמתו של צה"ל וכישר הרתעתו מצד שני, הינם המרכיבים המרכזיים בבטחון ישראל ובלבד שסדורי בטחון מוצקים יהיו בבסיס הסכמי השלום העומדים עדיין לפנינו. הסכמי השלום עם סוריה ולבנון והסדר הקבע עם הרשות הפלסטינית.

לפני חודשים אחדים נפל דבר חמור ביותר בתולדות מדינתנו, ראש ממשלתנו, יצחק רבין, נרצח בידי ישראל יחודי, שנוכח בארצנו, התחנך בה וגדל בה. עד לאותו יום אומלל, איש מאיתנו לא העלה בדימוינו שפעם שפל מסוג זה יכול לקרות אצלנו, בחברתנו ובמשטרתנו. העבודה האמינה תמיד ותוקף להאמין, על אף הרצח, במשטר הדמוקרטי: הקול בקלפי והפתקים במשאלי-עם הם הם, ולא כדורי אקדח יקבעו את גורלנו, משטר מדינתנו ואורח חיינו. העבודה פוסלת פסיקה מוחלטת וחסרת פשרות, שימוש באלימות מסוג כלשהו בחברה בה אנו חיים ושוללת כל עימות של ישראלים עם כוחות הבטחון שלנו ובכלל זה עימותים עם צה"ל ומשטרת ישראל. העבודה תקפיד על כך שמדינת ישראל תהיה מדינת חוק שחוקיה חלים על אזרחיה ותושביה ללא יוצא מן הכלל. השמירה על החוק הסבלנות והסובלנות חייבים לחזור ולהיות המסד למשטר הדמוקרטי שלנו.

לפני ארבע שנים שינתה ממשלת ישראל את סדר העדיפויות הלאומי שלנו.

הפסקנו את ההוצאות רחבות היקף בהתנחלויות הפוליטיות שגרמו לביזבז משאבים לאומיים ושעתידות היו להוציא את שלטוננו על עם אחר ולהפוך את מדינתנו למדינה דו לאומית.

היצבנו בראש העדיפויות שלנו - אחר הבטחון והשלום - את החינוך, חיסול האבטלה, הצמיחה הכלכלית, הפחתת האינפלציה, השקעות בתשתית, הרחבת החקיקה הסוציאלית, וכל זאת תוך התמודדות מרשימה עם אתגרי קליטת העליה הגדולה המבוזבזת וחוסר התקדים שהיינו עדים לה כולנו. מעולם לא היתה בישראל, ממשלה כממשלת העבודה שעשתה, במרוצת ארבע השנים שחלפו, לצמיחה הכלכלית של המדינה בקצב שאין לו אח בעולם כולו, ששיפרה את רמת החיים של תושביה בצורה כה מוחשית ושהחלה לפעול באופן שיטתי להבאת שוויון של אמת ולצמצום של ממש בפערים בין השכבות השונות של אזרחינו.

מפלגת העבודה וראשה נחשבים בדעתם להצעיד את העם והמדינה אל שנת האלפים תוך הנפת ארבעה דגלים בעת ובעונה אחת: דגל הביטחון, דגל השלום, הדגל החברתי והתרבותי והדגל הכלכלי. עוצמתה הביטחונית של המדינה תלויה בעצם השנת השלום, בחוסנה החברתי והכלכלי ובערכי הנצח של עם ישראל ותרבותו ורוחו.

מפלגת העבודה וראשה יעודדו ויקפחו את המצוינות ויעבירו את האיטרציה והשוויניות, את שוויון ההזדמנויות לפרט ויכולתו להגיע לרווחה ולהשגיות כלכלית וחברתית נאותה. העבודה תממן במדיניות של העדפה מתקנת, כדי להגיע לצדק חברתי, לצמצום פערים חברתיים ולמינועת כל אפליה על רקע מוצא, לאום או מין.

העבודה עשתה יותר מכל ממשלה קודמת לחינוך גורמי אכיפת החוק, המשטרה ובתי-המשפט ותוסיף לעשות להיותנו מדינת-חוק.

מפלגת העבודה וראשה יעשו כל מאמץ סביר למנוע קיפאון מדיני, בזבוז משאבים וחסימות להתקדמות להסכמי שלום הטומנים בחובם סכנות מלחמתיות קשות, ובכלל זה הסכנה של הכנסת נשק השמדה המוני לאזורנו. במקום זה אנו נחשבים בדעתנו להוביל בכנסת וכממשלה הבאה שינויים חדשניים כדי לקדם את השלום והבטחון ולהמשיך את הצמיחה הכלכלית החברתית והתרבותית כדי שישאל תמשיך להתקדם במהירות ובבטחה ולהיות חברת מופת צודקת.

מדיניות לשלום ובטחון

שלום ומזרח תיכון חדש

העבודה שואפת למזרח תיכון חדש שבו לא יהיו עוד מלחמות ולא מעשי טרור, ומשאבים כלכליים אדירים לא יוקדשו למרוץ חימוש. נחיה במזרח התיכון בו שורר שלום ובטחון אישי ולאומי, שיש בו שוק משותף עם מערכות אזוריות של השקיה, תיירות תחבורה ותקשורת של שיתוף פעולה בתחומי אנרגיה תרבות ומדע.

טרור החיובאללה, והטרור של החמס והג'יהאד הינם אויבי בטחון הפרט בישראל אך אין בהם סכנה אסטרטגית לישראל משום שאין בכוחם וביכולתם לאיים על עצם קיומנו הלאומי. אין בדעת העבודה לאפשר לטרור זה לקטול את תקוות השלום או לפגוע בבטחון הפרט בישראל.

מדיניות השלום והבטחון של ישראל תמשיך לפעול למען סיום הסכסוך הישראלי-ערבי עד לשנת 2000.

סיום הסכסוך ייצור מזרח תיכון חדש, האיור יושעת על יחסי שותף פעולה כלכלי לתחומי, קשרים הדדיים במישורי התרבות, המדע והטכנולוגיה, קידום ומיתוח משותף של רמת החיים ורווחתם, והבטחת עתיד טוב יותר ומגוון הזדמנויות לדורות הצעירים באזורנו. כדי להגיע למטרה זו, תמשיך ישראל לנהל מו"מ לשלום, ובו זמנית תאבק בשרידי המזרח התיכון הישן, כוחות הפוגדמנטליות והטרור שמגמתם להרוס תהליך זה. המציאות החדשה תחוק את בטחונה של ישראל ומעמדה בין העמים, ותעודד את שגשוגה הכלכלי ואת רוחתה של המדינה.

בטחון ישראל

מדיניות השלום של ישראל מושתת על יכולת ההרתעה הגבוהה של צה"ל, ועל עוצמתו.

שלום יציב הינו לכשיצמדו מרכיב בטחוני חשוב בחוסנה של המדינה, יציבות זו מתבססת בין היתר גם על גבולות בני הגנה וסידורי בטחון חיוניים, אותם תציב

מפלגת העבודה כגורם מכריע בכל הסדרי השלום המתקמים. ישראל תמשיך לפתח את יתרונה האיכותי על פני צבאות ערב, ותעניק עדיפות גבוהה למחקר ופיתוח עצמאיים בתחומי הבטחון ולהרחבת היצור העצמי של נשק וציוד צבאי חדיש ומתוחכם.

המאבק בטרור ובחתרנות יהווה מרכיב מרכזי במדיניות השלום והבטחון של ישראל. מאבק זה ישא אופי יזום והגנתי כאחד. ממשלת ישראל תראה עצמה חופשית לבחור את המקום, השיטה, האמצעים והעיתוי למלחמה בטרור. המאבק בטרור זה מחייב עמידה איתנה, תחכום, נחישות, סבלנות והתגייסות אזרחית ובינלאומית, שיסודותיה כבר הונחו על ידי ממשלת העבודה.

במסגרת מאבק זה, תמשיך ישראל לפעול למען חידוק שיתוף הפעולה הבינלאומי והאיוווי למאבק נגד הטרור, כפי שהחל להדקם בוועידת שארם-א-שייך, ובהסכם שחתמו הנשיא קלינטון וראש הממשלה שמעון פרס. ישראל תיאבק נגד חימוש בנשק להשמדה המונית של מדינות בעלות אידאולוגיה של שואה והרס, ובראש ובראשונה איראן. היא תפעל במסגרות אזרחיות ובינלאומיות כדי למנוע את החיבור הקטלני בין אידאולוגיה פונדמנטליסטית לבין נשק לא קונבנציונאלי. צה"ל יופעל לאבטחת קיומה של מדינת ישראל, הנגדה, בטחונה ושלומה. ההסכמה הלאומית בהפעלת כוחו של צה"ל - היא נושא לאומי חיוני שיש לכלול אותו בשיקולים של הממשלה. יש להוציא את צה"ל מתחומי הפולמוס והמחלוקת הבין מפלגתית.

מזימה להסדרי שלום

על בסיס מריצת הדרך בתהליך השלום בשנים האחרונות, תנהל ישראל מרימה להסכמי שלום קבועים עם הרשות הפלסטינית, סוריה ולבנון. מרימה זה מסתוו להביא לשלום כולל ובר-קיימא-באיוור, לחזק את בטחונה הלאומי של ישראל, ולאפשר לה להנות מצמיחה כלכלית ורווחה חברתית ואישית.

הסדר הקבע עם הפלסטינים:

- המזימה יושעת על בסיס הסכמי אוסלו, וישראל תעמוד במשא ומתן על העקרונות הבאים:
1. ירושלים המאוחדת, בירת ישראל, בריבונות ישראל.
 2. ישראל לא תשלוט בעם הפלסטינאי.
 3. נהר הירדן יהיה גבול הבטחון המזרחי של ישראל ולא יהיה צבא אחר ממערב לו.

מצע מפלגת העבודה לכנסת ה-14

4. המרדה שתענה על צרכי הבטחון והזהירות הלאומיות.
 5. ריבונות על בקעת הירדן, צפון-מערב ים-המלח, גוש עציון, ושטחים חיוניים לבטחון ישראל.
 6. שתוף פעולה כלכלי פלסטיני ירדני וישראלי.
 7. יישוב בעיית הפליטים הפלסטינים מחוץ למדינת ישראל תוך שלילת זכות השיבה.
 8. השארת מרבית המתיישבים הישראלים בריבונות ישראל (לא תוקמנה התנחלויות חדשות).
- הסדר הקבע שינובש במשא ומתן יובא לאישור משאל-עם.

הסכם שלום עם סוריה:

העבודה רואה בגולן אזור בעל חשיבות לאומית למדינת-ישראל. ימשך המו"מ לשלום עם סוריה, על בסיס החלטות מועצת הבטחון 242 ו-338. ההסכם המבוקש יושתת על גבולות בטחון והסדרי בטחון מוצקים. הבטחת מקורות המים החיוניים לישראל וקיום יחסי נורמליזציה מליאה בין שתי המדינות בדגש על שיתוף פעולה כלכלי. ההסכם עם סוריה ילווה במערכת הסכמים עם מרבית מדינות ערב. הסדר הקבע שינובש במשא ומתן יובא לאישור במשאל עם.

הסכם שלום עם לבנון:

ההסכם יושתת על שמירת האינטרסים הבטחוניים של המדינה בכללה ותושבי הצפון בפרט, תוך אבטחת מיגור הטרור. לישראל אין שאיפות טריטוריאליות או מדיניות בלבנון, ומטרתה למתח יחסי נורמליזציה ושיתוף פעולה כלכלי בין שתי המדינות. עד להשגת הסכם השלום, תמשיך ישראל להגן על גבולה הצפוני ע"י רצועת בטחון בדרום לבנון באמצעות כוחות מקומיים בניבוי של צה"ל, וע"י הסדרי בטחון חיוניים אחרים. במסגרת הסכם השלום יובטח שילובו של צבא דרום לבנון בצבא לבנון.

משאל-עם

עם תום המו"מ לשלום עם סוריה, והמרי"מ על הסדר הקבע עם הפלסטינים, ולאחר שתשכנע הממשלה כי הושגו ההסכמים הטובים ביותר למדינת ישראל, השומרים על האינטרסים החיוניים שלה ומבטיחים לה שלום ובטחון, יובאו הסכמים אלה להכרעת הציבור הישראלי בדרך של משאל עם. קיומו של משאל עם יאפשר בידי הממשלה יכולת תמרון גדולה יותר במהלך המו"מ, ללא חשיפת עמדותינו בפני העמיתים למו"מ. נקיטת צעד זה מהווה לכן הן אסטרטגיה בפני עצמה והן עמדה ערכית של מפלגת העבודה, הרואה בציבור בישראל שותף להחלטות מכריעות בסוגיות יחודיות הנוגעות לעתיד המדינה ועיצובה.

ישראל וארה"ב

יחסיה של ישראל עם ארה"ב הגיעו לנקודת שיא באשר לאיכות הקשרים והידידות העמוקה בינינו לבין הממשל, הקונגרס והעם האמריקאי. הממשלה תפעל ליצירת תוכן נוסף ביחסים אלו ע"י מיסודן ומימושן של ברית אסטרטגית וברית ללוחמה נגד הטרור בין ישראל לארה"ב. הקירבה המיוחדת בין שתי המדינות נהווה לא רק בשל אינטרס אסטרטגי, אלא בעיקר הודות לזיקה הערכית והמוסרית שביניהן. ישראל מוקירה את הסיוע הכלכלי והבטחוני לו היא זוכה מארה"ב ואת אבטחת יתרונה האיכותי באזור, ומעריכה את תרומתה היחודית של ארה"ב לתהליך השלום במזרח התיכון.

שלום אזורי

העבודה רואה בהשגת שלום אזורי נדבך מרכזי בחתירתה הכוללת להתוותו של מזרח תיכון חדש. במסגרת זו תפעל הממשלה להמשך חיזוקם של יחסי השלום עם שכנותיה מצרים וירדן. במקביל תפעל ישראל להעמקת מערכות יחסיה הקיימות עם מרוקו, תוניסיה, מאוריטניה, עומאן וקטאר והעלאת דרג הקשרים עימן, כמו גם לקשירת יחסים עם שאר מדינות ערב השוחרות לשלום. ישראל תמשיך בשיתוף עם שכנותיה ליצירת אוירה הדדית חיובית בציבוריות ובכלי התקשורת, כדי להעמיק את קירוב הלבבות בין העמים ולאפשר את מיצוי פירות השלום. הממשלה תפעל להמשך מיסודם של הסדרים אזוריים היוצרים

שותפויות ואינטרסים הדדיים בין עמי האזור לבין עצמם, ובינם לבין נושאים אזוריים אחרים.

בראית מפלגת העבודה מהוות מערכות שיתוף הפעולה לפיתוח אזורי חיוק ותמיכה לתהליך השלום, ובסיס מוצק ליציבות הנצרת באזור.

הדגש יושם על ההיבט הכלכלי וההיבט האסטרטגי של תהליך השלום בהקשרי האזורי, וכן על שיתופי פעולה ישומיים בתחומים כגון מים, איכות סביבה, תרבות, מדע, טכנולוגיה ועוד.

במסגרת זו:

ישראל מייחסת חשיבות רבה למבנה הכלכלי והאסטרטגי של המזרח התיכון בזמן שלום, במגמה לעצב מציאות אזורית חדשה. בהקשר זה תפעל הממשלה למען המשך מיסוד הקשרים באזור, על בסיס התהליכים המהפכניים אשר עוצבו בשנים האחרונות. כגון: תהליך השלום המולטיטרלי, ועידות קובלנקה, עמאן וברצלונה לעידוד השקעות הסקטור הפרטי במזרח התיכון, הקמת הבנק האזורי וקידום מערכות יחסי סחר ותיירות אזוריים. כן יבוטל דשמים החרם הערבי. הממשלה תפעל ליצירת שיתוף פעולה בתחום משטר הבטחון האזורי. במסגרת הסכמי שלום אמת תבחן ישראל בחיוב את צמצום החימוש באזור, ייקבעו דרכים להקטנת כוחות צבאיים, ליצירת מאזן כוחות מוסכם ולמניעת הכנסתו של נשק להשמדה המונית לאזור.

היחסים הבינלאומיים של ישראל

פריצת הדרך בתהליך השלום יצרה מערכת גלובאלית חדשה עבור מדינת ישראל, אשר מקיימת יחסים דיפלומטיים עם 158 מדינות, ושואפת להשלים את מעגל יחסיה עם כל מדינות העולם.

הממשלה תפעל למיצוי פוטנציאל הקשרים הנרחב, שנפתח על רקע זה, במני ישראל לתועלת הבאת נכסים למדינה-פנימה. דגש מיוחד יושם על פיתוח יחסי הכלכלה והסחר הבינלאומי של המדינה עם מדינות הנמצאות בסימן צמיחה, בעיקר בצפון אמריקה, באירופה ובמזרח הרחוק.

כמו כן תפעל ישראל למען הידוק קשרי התיירות עם המדינות והנושאים האזוריים השונים והעמקת מערכות היחסים בתחומי התרבות, החינוך, המדע, החקלאות, הטכנולוגיה והרפואה.

ישראל תשאף להפוך למדינה התורסת ביותר שאת מהידע הרב שפיתחה, לתועלת מדינות מתפתחות.

כן תשאף הממשלה להעמיק את ההבנה וההידברות בין הדתות, עם דגש על

האיסלם והנצרות, וזאת מתוך תובנה שדיאלוג בין הדתות עשוי לתרום להגברת הכבוד בין העמים.

ירושלים

ירושלים, בירתה של מדינת ישראל ומרכזו של העם היהודי, **תשאר מאוחדת ושלמה. בריבונות ישראל.**

בעת המו"מ לשלום תעמוד הממשלה על כך ש**סביבות ירושלים** כולל מעלה אדומים, גבעת זאב וגוש עציון וצפון מערב ים המלח יהיו **בריבונות ישראל**. ממשלה בראשות העבודה תבטיח את המשך חופש הגישה, חופש הביטוי וחופש הפולחן, במקומות הקדושים בירושלים, לבני כל העמים והדתות. בירושלים, עיר הקודש אליה משואות עיניהם של מיליוני מאמינים בני דתות שונות בכל העולם, יובטח המעמד הדתי המיוחד של המקומות הקדושים לאיסלם ולנצרות. סובלנות ואורך רוח ימשיכו להיות עקרונ יסוד במדיניות המנחה את פעילות הממשלה והעירייה. הממשלה תראה בעיקרון של מתן שירותים שווים, תוך התייחסות לצרכים המיוחדים של האוכלוסיה המגוונת יעד חשוב ומרכזי לביסוס אחדותה של ירושלים.

הממשלה תראה כמחויבות וחובה, עפ"י חוק, לכבד את זכויותיהם האזרחיות והדתיות של כל חלקי האוכלוסיה בעיר, ללא הבדל דת ולאום, ולדאוג לצורכי כלל התושבים.

הממשלה לא תחסוך במאמצים להבטיח את **בטחונם האישי של כל תושבי העיר והבאים בשעריה**.

הבטחת חוסנה של הריקמה החברתית בירושלים, מחייבת מאמצים מיוחדים בתחומי החינוך, התרבות, הרווחה והשיכון, על מנת להבטיח את הצרכים הייחודיים של מגוון האוכלוסיות בירושלים. הממשלה תדאג למרכיבים חברתיים בעלי חשיבות מיוחדת, לטיפול מנהיגות מקומית, לשיפור איכות החיים החברה והסביבה של בירת ישראל, ותעשה במיוחד להפחתת העוני בירושלים ולסיע לעניי העיר.

ממשלת ישראל בראשות העבודה תעמיד לרשות עיריית ירושלים את התקציבים הדרושים להמשך הפיתוח של מערכות התשתית בכל רחבי העיר. כמו-כן תבטיח כי תנאי הדיור, המשכנתאות והתמריצים בירושלים יהיו זהים לאלו הקיימים בישובים אחרים באזור.

הממשלה תפעל להקמת מפעלים חדשים בעיר, לפיתוח אזור התעשייה באזור פיתוח מועדף ותקדם את פעילותם של מוסדות המדע, המחקר והרפואה בעיר, תוך הקצאת משאבים לשם כך.

ירושלים תהיה אבן שואבת לצעירים, שיתנאו להיות תושביה ולא ינטשו אותה.

חברה וכלכלה

מבוא

■ במרכז תמיסתה החברתית כלכלית של העבודה עומדת הבטחת ביטחון, רווחתו ועילוי של האדם. אנו מאמינים כי הדרך לכך היא דאגה מתמדת לפיתוח כלכלי, לשוויון הזדמנויות וצדק חברתי, ומתן אפשרות לכל פרט להביא לידי ביטוי את כישרו ויכולתו.

■ הממשלה תמשיך להפעיל תוכנית כלכלית שבמרכזה ההשקעות בפיתוח וקידומו של הפרט בחברה והכנת התשתית לפיתוח כלכלי של הסקטור הפרטי והציבורי. תנופת הפיתוח הכלכלי תישען על תהליך השלום והמשך העלייה ותבטיח שמירה על רמת תעסוקה גבוהה ושאיפה להגיע לרמת הכנסה לגפּש של המדינות המתועשות. עיקרי התוכנית הכלכלית יהיו הגדלת הפריזון והיעילות, הגברת החיסכון הציבורי והפרטי ופינוי מקורות לצמיחה מוטט יצוא.

■ המשק הישראלי חייב להתאים עצמו לפתיחות, תחרותיות וניהול חופשי ממגבלות מנהליות וממעורבות יתר של הממשלה בחיי המשק והכלכלה. אולם הניסיון הישראלי, כמו גם הניסיון של מדינות מפותחות אחרות, מצביע על כך שבמצבי משבר, מלחמה והצורך בקליטת עליה בהיקפים גדולים נדרשת מעורבות ממשלתית וציבורית בתחומים מסוימים לשם הכוונת הפעילות הכלכלית. כמו כן מילוי יעדים לאומיים והטיפול במגורים מסוימים במשק (כגון החקלאות) מחייבים הפעלת מכשירי תכנון ומעורבות ממשלתית מסוימת. קליטת העלייה מחייבת מעורבות ממשלתית בעידוד הצמיחה, בהמצאת פתרונות דיור, בסיוע במציאת תעסוקה הולמת, במתן שירותים חברתיים נאותים לעולים ובעזרה בקליטה חברתית.

■ לכל תושבי המדינה הזכות לתעסוקה ולביטחון סוציאלי בתחומי רווחה, בריאות, חינוך, שיכון, וסיעוד לעת זקנה. הממשלה תמשיך להבטיח סל שירותים חברתיים ברמה שתקבע מימן לזמן בהתאם לאפשרויות המשק והצרכים. דרך הספקת השירותים תעשה מתוך כוונה לאפשר חופש בחירה מירבי של השירותים לציבור המשתמשים והזכאים ובמגמה ליעל את השירותים החברתיים ובלבד שחופש הבחירה לא יהפוך כלי ליצירת מדינת רווחה לעשירים ולפגיעה בשכבות מעוטות יכולת.

■ העבודה תעניק עדיפות ברורה לאכלוס ומיתוח כלכלי של הנגב, הגליל ובמיוחד יישובי קו העימות בצפון. לשם כך יופעלו מערכות העידוד והסיוע לתושבי אזורים אלה לשם הקמת התשתיות הכלכליות והחברתיות בישובים, חיבורם למרכזי האוכלוסייה והעסקים במרכז הארץ, ולהקטנת הנטל המוטל עליהם. תשומת לב מיוחדת תוקדש לתמיכה ביוזמה להקמת ממעלים חדשים וחיווק קיימים כדי ליצור מקומות תעסוקה הולמים אשר ימשיכו לאזורים אלו עולים וותיקים וימנעו עויבה של צעירים בני המקום.

עקרונות המדיניות הכלכלית - חברתית

■ העבודה דוגלת בקיומו של **משק מעורב-תחרותי** המורכב מהמגזר הפרטי, הממשלתי והציבורי, המתנהל על בסיס כלכלי - עסקי ללא אפליה ואשר בו שיוויון הודמנויות לכל.

■ הממשלה תצמצם ככל האפשר מעורבותה בפעילות העסקית הרגילה והשירה, ותגביר את קצב מכירת החברות שבבעלותה תוך הידברות עם עובדיהן, מטרות המכירה, גיוס אמצעים להשקעות, למיתוח המשק והפסקת קיומם של שיקולים פוליטיים ארים בדרך הניהול של גופים עסקיים.

■ תהליך ההתייעלות של המגזר הציבורי יהיה מלווה בהקטנת מספר משרדי הממשלה ו**בצמצום בירוקרטיה** בכל התחומים, בראש וראשונה יקצרו תהליכים מורמליים המכבידים על האזרחים והמעילות העסקיות. הממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להגדלת הפתיחות והתחרותיות במשק.

■ הממשלה תנהיג **מדיניות תקציבית מרסנת, מדיניות מוניטרית מאוזנת ומדיניות שער חליפין נאותה**, במטרה להגיע להורדה הדרגתית באינפלציה ו**בריבית** לרמה המקובלת במדינות המתועשות, להגדיל את החיסכון וההשקעות, להשיג צמיחה מוטת יצוא והסרת מרבית המיקוח על מטבע חוץ בתחילת המאה ה-21.

■ כדי לשמור על רמה גבוהה של **תעסוקה** ויצרנות במשק, הממשלה בראשות העבודה תקדם ההידברות בין ההסתדרות הכללית, הממשלה, הארגונים הכלכליים והעצמאיים תוך מגמה להגיע להבנה בנושאי מדינת השכר, המסים,

התעסוקה והמחירים. **השכר הריאלי במשק יעלה** בעקבות הפריץ. העבודה תומכת בקיומו של חוק שכר המינימום המוגזג ניצול של עובדים ומבטיח יתר שוויוניות בחלוקת ההכנסה.

■ **המדיניות החברתית** תהיה מושתתת על בסיס מתן הדמנויות שוות באמצעות מערכת החינוך הכללי והמקצועי, מתן שירותי בריאות על בסיס מוסכם לכל האוכלוסייה, הקמה וחיוק מערכות מנסיה ממוגנות וצמצום פערי ההכנסות באמצעות מערכת המיסוי, הביטוח הלאומי, השתתפות במימון שירותים חברתיים ותשלומי העברה אחרים.

■ **שמירה על קצב צמיחה גבוה** יתאפשר על ידי המשך תהליך השלום והעליה הגדולה, הגדלת הפריץ, נידול מאמצי החיסכון, ההשקעות, גיוס הון מחוץ, מדיניות כלכלית כוללת מתאימה, יצירת אווירה תומכת בפעילות העסקית ופתיחת ענפים המתאפיינים בקרטלים ומונופולים בכני יומים חדשים.

■ **עיקר המאמץ** בהשקעות יופנה להכנת **תשתית** מתקדמת בתחבורה, חשמל, תקשורת מים וביוב, תוך דגש על אזורי פיתוח, ולסיוע להשקעות במחקר ופיתוח.

■ **העבודה תתמוך בהמשך ביצוע השיפורים הנדרשים בתפקוד שוק ההון**, כולל הקטנת מעורבות הממשלה בשוק זה, פיתוח שוק הון, סיכון, ופתיחות מבוקרת של שוק ההון הישראלי לתנועות הון בינלאומיות.

■ **הגדלת החיסכון** תתאפשר על ידי הגברת מאמצי הייעול במשק הציבורי, שמירה על מדיניות תקציבית אחראית, צמצום הגירעון בתקציב הממשלה ועידוד החיסכון העסקי והפרטי על ידי שמירת יציבות, **הורדת שיעורי המס** ומניעת ערעור האמון בחסכון.

■ **הממשלה תמשיך לנהל מדיניות סחר** המושתתת על הגברת המאמצים ליצירת הסדרי סחר אווריים, השתלבות המשק בסחר העולמי ובמסגרות בינלאומיות, שער חליפין נאות המסייע בצמיחה מוסת יצוא, וחשיפה מבוקרת ליבוא מתחרה.

■ **הממשלה תיווץ פריקטים** משותפים עם מדינות האזור ותסייע לגיוס הון בינלאומי לפיתוח המזרח התיכון.

אמצעים

מדיניות התקציב

■ הממשלה תנהל גם בשנים הבאות תקציב עם גירעון חולך ופוחת לקראת איוונו בראשית המאה ה-21.

■ תקציב המדינה יבטא את סדרי העדיפות הלאומיים, הצורך בהגברת החיסכון הציבורי והצורך בפינוי מקורות לצמיחה מוטת יצוא.

■ התקציב ימשיך לשמש כמכשיר מרכזי **להקטנת הפערים החברתיים** ולחלוקה צודקת יותר של ההכנסות.

תעסוקה והכשרה מקצועית

■ העבודה רואה בהבטחת תעסוקה לכל דורש וביכולת להתפרנס בכבוד וכות יסוד של כל תושב.

■ הממשלה תשמור על רמת תעסוקה גבוהה על ידי מדיניות כלכלית תומכת והקצאת משאבים להשקעות בתשתית ובמחקר ופיתוח.

■ הממשלה תיעזר במסלולי הסיוע הקיימים לקידום תעסוקת **עולים** בתקופת הסתגלותם לחיים חדשים בארץ. כמו כן תשתמש הממשלה במכשירי ההכשרה המקצועית כדי להתאים ולשפר רמתם המקצועית במטרה לסייע להם למצוא מקומות עבודה הולמים, ותפעיל תוכניות יחודיות לשיפור קליטת העולים בעלי השכלה גבוהה במשק הישראלי.

■ צרכי השעה חייבו הגדלת ההעסקה של **עובדים זרים** בישראל. הממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לצמצום בתופעת העסקת העובדים הזרים על ידי הגברת הפיקוח על העסקתם, הגבלת מספרם והגדלת ההשקעות במיכון והפריון בענפי החקלאות והבנייה.

מיסוי

■ העבודה תמשיך להשתמש במכשיר המיסוי כדי להקטין את אי השוויון בחלוקת ההכנסה במשק. הממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל להרחבת בסיס המס, **להורדת שערי המס המרביים** המוטלים על הכנסות יחידים, לריווח מדרגות המס המוטל על יחידים, להמשך הורדת שיעורי המכס ומס הקנייה בהתאם למדיניות החשיפה המבוקרת, לפישוט דיווחים, להגדלת המאמצים לחשיפת המשתמשים מתשלום מס **ולגביית מס אמת**.

שוק ההון

■ הממשלה תמשיך בתהליך מכירת אחזקותיה בנקים לשותפים אסטרטגים ולציבור הרחב, תפעל להגדלת תחרות בין המוסדות הפועלים בשוק ההון ולפתיחתו המבוקרת לתנועות הון בינלאומיות.

■ העבודה תתמוך בהמשך ביצוע השיפורים הנדרשים בתפקוד שוק ההון, כולל הקטנת מעורבות הממשלה בשוק זה, פיתוח שוק הון סיכון והמשך שכלול החקיקה להגברת בטחון המשקיעים ויצירת אפשרות של פעילות במתכונת הנהוגה במדינות בעלות שווקים מפותחים.

■ הממשלה תמשיך לפעול להסדרת מערכת הפנסיה ובמיוחד פעילות קרנות הפנסיה. העקרונות העיקריים להסדר יהיו **שמירת זכויות הגמלאים** הזכאים לפנסיה והשקעת כספי החוסכים בשוק ההון כאשר הממשלה תבטיח "רשת ביטחון" של ריבית מינימלית.

הצרכנות

■ העבודה תמשיך במדיניות המבטאת פתיחות והגברת התחרות במשק אשר לה השפעה חיובית על שיפור רמת החיים ואיכותם בישראל. העבודה תפעל לעדכון, להרחבה ולשיפור של החקיקה הקיימת **להגנת הצרכן** ותפעל להגברת המודעות של תושבי ישראל לגבי זכויותיהם כצרכנים.

התעשייה

- הממשלה תמשיך לפעול בצורה נמרצת ליצור את התנאים הנדרשים למימוש היכולת הרבה הטמונה בתעשייה על ידי:
 1. יצירת תנאים מתאימים להגדלה מואצת ביצוא.
 2. הגדלת הסיוע הממשלתי להכשרה מקצועית.
 3. סיוע להקמת תשתית לתעשייה באזורי מיתוח ולהקמת מפעלים בגליל ובנגב ובמזר הערבי והדרוזי.
 4. המשך הסיוע המוגבר למחקר ופיתוח.
 5. הנהגת מדיניות כלכלית תומכת ומדיניות שער חלופין נאותה, במטרה להגיע להורדה הדרגתית באינפלציה ובריבית לרמה המקובלת במדינות המתועשות. מדיניות זו תסייע להגדלת ההשקעות בתעשייה ולהשגת הגדלה מואצת של היצוא התעשייתי.
 6. המשך הסיוע הקיים לפי החוק לעידוד השקעות הון שיותאם ליעדי הגידול בתעסוקה באזורי הפיתוח והגדלת הסיוע להקמת תשתית לתעשייה באזורים אלה.

- הממשלה תמשיך לפעול להבראת התעשיות הביטחוניות ולהתאמת פעילותן לנסיבות החדשות שנוצרו בסוף שנות השמונים עקב הירידה בתקציב הביטחון וירידת הביקושים מחו"ל. יופעלו תוכניות הבראה לתעשיות במגמה לאפשר להן עצמאות עסקית וייזום כלכלי בעתיד. יתן סיוע זמני בתזרים המזומנים שייצב את פעולת התעשיות ויאפשר המשך תפקודם והתאמת מספר העובדים בתעשיות אל היקף ההזמנות תוך מתן פיצוי הולם לעובדים שיאלצו לפרוש.

תיירות

- העבודה רואה בתעשיית התיירות מרכיב מרכזי בתהליך הצמיחה מוטת היצוא של המשק. לכן הממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך לשים דגש על שיווק הענף בחו"ל יחד עם קידום פעולות בתחום התכנון והתשתיות. פעולות אלו נועדו לסלק צווארי בקבוק העלולים למנוע או לעכב את הגידול הצפוי בהיקף התיירות לישראל בעקבות תהליך השלום והשינויים באזור.
- יימשך קידום מערך הפרסום והשיווק של מוצרי התיירות הישראליים בעולם. יישמו פעולות תכנון ברמות השונות, יימשך פיתוח התשתית הציבורית ויחול שיפור נוסף במערך הכשרת כוח האדם בענף.

מצע מכללת העבודה לכנסת ה-14

■ הממשלה בהנהגת העבודה תמשיך בתהליך יישום מדיניות תעופה המסייעת להרחבת ענף התיירות.

ענפי התשתית

■ הממשלה תמשיך לפעול לחיסול הפיגור בהשקעות בתשתית להרחבת התשתית המתבקשת מהרחבת הפעילות הנובעת מהעלייה הגדולה, ולהפעלה מנהלית ותכנונית יעילה כך שתובטח מעילות סדירה של ענפי התשתית.

תחבורה

■ הממשלה תמשיך **לסלק "הפקקים" והשיירות** בכבישים ובדרכים ותעשה לפתרון מקיף של בעיות התחבורה הארצית והעירונית.

■ תמשך תנופת התכנון והסלילה של עורקי תחבורה ראשיים בתוכם כביש חוצה ישראל, מנהרת הכרמל, חיבור אוזרי הפיתוח בצירי תחבורה מהירים למרכז הארץ וסלילת דרכי גישה לשובים יהודים, ערבים ודרוזים ברחבי המדינה לפי סדר עדימויות.

■ הממשלה תמשיך לתת **עדיפות למלחמה בתאונות הדרכים** ותקצה משאבים לטיפול בגורמים לתאונות העוליות בחיי אדם וסבל כה רב.

■ תינתן עדיפות גבוהה ביותר ליצירת **מערכת הסעה המונית** לנוש דן, תופעל חברה ציבורית שתתכנן ותנהל הקמת מערכת תחבורה משולבת ויעילה לרשויות המקומיות השונות וביניהן.

■ הממשלה תפעל להאצת **הרחבת שדה התעופה** בן גוריון והקדמת התכנון של שדה התעופה הבינלאומי של ישראל למאה ה-21. כמו כן תבחן הממשלה הקמתו של שדה תעופה בינלאומי משלים בנגב, משולב עם מסילת רכבת מהירה.

תקשורת

■ העבודה רואה בפיתוח רשת תקשורת מתקדמת, פתוחה ותחרותית תשתית לאומית חשובה לקידום הכלכלה, התרבות, החשכלה והחברה בישראל. ההשקעות

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בפיתוח הענף, הגברת יעילותו ושיפור ברמת המחירים ואיכות השירותים עשויים להיות גורם חשוב בתהליך הצמיחה והפיכת ישראל למרכז עסקים בינלאומי.

1. יישלם פיתוח מערכת תקשורת לוויינים ישראלית.
2. הממשלה תיוזם הקמת רשת תקשורת שתחומי אחריותה העיקריים יהיו רישוי, פיקוח ואכיפה ויעוץ לממשלה בענייני מדיניות.
3. יימשך תהליך פתיחת מקטעים שונים של הענף לתחרות תוך התייעצות עם כל הגורמים בענף.
4. העבודה תפעל למנוע התערבות של הממשלה במדיניות ובביצוע השידורים בתקשורת האלקטרונית.
5. העבודה רואה את הזכות לדעת ואת חופש הביטוי כזכויות יסוד שמימושן יובטח על ידי עיתונות חופשית ומגוונת ואמצעי תקשורת לא מונופוליסטיים.
6. העבודה תמשיך לפעול לענן את חופש העיתונות וחופש הביטוי תוך שמירת זכויות הפרט, בחוקת המדינה.

שיכון

■ הממשלה תמשיך לפעול להבטחת **שיכון נאות** לאוכלוסיית המדינה ובמיוחד לעולים, זוגות צעירים, משפחות חד הוריות, יחידים ותושבי אזורי הפיתוח ויישובי עדיפות לאומית.

- הממשלה תיוזם פעולות ליישוב **ענף הבנייה ומחירי הדיור** על ידי:
 1. הכנת מלאי תכנוני מאושר לבניה, בראיה תכנונית כוללת, בהיקף מינימלי של 400,000 יחידות דיור עד לסוף 1998.
 2. שווק נרחב במכרזים של קרקע לבניה בהיקף של 50,000 יחידות דיור בשנה לפי רמות הביקוש באזורים השונים.
 3. תיקונים בחוק המקרקעין וחוקים רלוונטיים אחרים במטרה להגדיל את ניצולת הקרקע.
 4. פתיחת מכרזי משרד הביטוי והשיכון ומנהל מקרקעי ישראל לקבוצות קבלנים נוספים ותגמשת תנאי השיווק של משרד הביטוי והשיכון.

■ הממשלה תמשיך בסיוע במציאת **פתרונות דיור** לקבוצות הזכאים הכוללות זוגות צעירים, עולים, משפחות חד הוריות, זכאים ביישובי פיתוח ויישובי עדיפות לאומית, יחידים, משפחות המתגוררות בצפיפות דיור מעיקה ותושבי אתרי הדיור

הזמני. הסיוע יהיה על ידי מענקים מוחלטים ומענקים מותנים, הלוואות עם ריבית מסובסדת והצמדה חלקית וסיוע בשכר דירה לעולים ולוותיקים. הסיוע בשכר דירה יינתן לעולים חדשים עד תום השנה החמישית לעלייתם ארצה, למיעוטי הכנסה העונים על מבחני הכנסה ושוכרים בדיר ציבורי על פי מבחני יכולת כלכליים.

■ הממשלה תמשיך לממן הקמתם של מוסדות ציבור המשרתים את הבנייה החדשה על פי עקרונות כלכליים שנקבעו על ידי ועדת המנכ"לים לבנייה חדשה. הממשלה תפעיל את תוכנית החומש להשלמות הפיתוח וחיוק התשתיות במגזר הדרוזי והערבי.

■ ימשך העידוד לביצוע בניה להשכרה כדי ליצור היצע משמעותי של סוג שיכון זה למי שידו אינה משגת לרכוש דירה או מעוניין בסוג דור זה. עידוד הבנייה להשכרה יתבצע על ידי הקלות במס.

המגזר העסקי והעצמאיים

■ העבודה רואה במגזר העסקי ובעצמאיים כגורם חשוב בתהליך הצמיחה ותפעל להגשמת היעדים הבאים:

1. העבודה תמשיך לפעול לבטול האפליות הקיימות לגבי המגזר העסקי והעצמאיים.
2. עידוד יוזמות עסקיות ויוזמות לפתיחת עסקים קטנים וחיוק והרחבת הפעולה של הרשות לעסקים קטנים ומגזר האמצעים באמצעותם היא פועלת.
3. הגדלת האמון של המערכת הממשלתית בבעל העסק הקטן והבינוני.
4. שינויים בחוק לביטוח לאומי במטרה לבטל אפליות הקיימות לגבי מגזר העסקים הקטנים והבינוניים.
5. המשך הכרת אלמנטים מסוימים של תנאים סוציאליים לעצמאיים לצרכי מס.

מדיניות חברתית

■ העבודה רואה במנגנוני האיוון וההתערבות של המדיניות החברתית כלים עיקריים במאמץ למנוע קיטוב כלכלי וחברתי. קיטוב זה עלול להביא אתו ניכור ועוינות של הקבוצות החלשות כלפי החברה ויצירת מתחים בלתי נסבלים ואף קרע בחברה.

■ לכל תושבי המדינה הזכות לתעסוקה ולביטחון סוציאלי בתחומי הרווחה הבריאות, החינוך, השיכון וסיעוד לעת זקנה.

■ העבודה רואה בעוני בעיה כלכלית וחברתית משולבת. הממשלה תמשיך לפעול ומרצות לצמצום ממדי העוני ותרבות העוני תוך הקצאת המשאבים הדרושים לפתרון בעיית העוני.

■ הממשלה תפעל לחיזוק המגזר ההתנדבותי, המסייע בהשלמת החסר בשרותים חברתיים ממשלתיים.

■ יעדי המדיניות החברתית יהיו:

1. שוויון הזדמנויות בחינוך.
2. הבטחת תעסוקה לכל דורש ויכולת להתפרנס בכבוד.
3. קליטה כלכלית וחברתית של העלייה.
4. הבטחת זכותו של כל אורח לדוור ברמה נאותה ותנאי תשלום מותאמים ליכולתו.
5. צמצום ממדי העוני ותרבות העוני וטיפול במצוקות אישיות.
6. צמצום מערים חברתיים בהתייחס לקבוצות הכנסה, אזורים גיאוגרפיים, נשים וגברים וקבוצות מוצא.
7. הבטחת סל שירותים חברתיים ברמה שתקבע מוסך לזמן בהתאם לאפשרויות המשק והצרכים.

■ הממשלה תמשיך ביישום חוק **ביטוח בריאות** ממלכתי המעניק סל שירותים רפואיים מתקדמים ומלאים לכל אורח ללא קשר לרמת הכנסתו ולמקום מגוריו.

הממשלה תבחן את תיקון החוק במגמה להבטיח אשפוז סיעודי ולפטור מתשלום בעד תרופות למי שזכאי להשלמת הכנסה.

■ הממשלה תעודד הקמה וחיווק מערכות **פנסיה** מתקדמות. שכירים ועצמאיים יוכלו להיות חברים בקרנות הפנסיה למי בחירתם כפרטים או כקבוצות. יתקיים מיקוח ממשלתי על קרנות להקטנת רמת הסיכון בהם. הממשלה תמשיך לפעול להסדרת מערכת הפנסיה הקיימת ובמיוחד להסדיר את פעילות קרנות הפנסיה. העקרונות העיקריים להסדר יהיו שמירת זכויות הגמלאים הזכאים לפנסיה והשקעת כספי החוסכים בשוק ההון כאשר הממשלה תבטיח "רשת ביטחון" של ריבית מינימלית.

■ העבודה רואה ב**ביטוח הלאומי** אחד המכשירים החשובים של המדינה לשמירה על הביטחון הכלכלי והחברתי של כלל האוכלוסייה העובדת, ותעשה כמיטב יכולתה לשפר ולחזקו, בין היתר תוך בחינה מחודשת של תשלום כפל גימלאות לאוכלוסיות זכאיות.

■ הממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך בסיוע במציאת פתרונות **דיוור** לקבוצות הזכאים הבוללות וזוגות צעירים, עולים, משפחות חד הוריות, זכאים ביישובי מיתוח ויישובי עדיפות לאומית, יחידים, משפחות המתגוררות בצפיפות דיוור מעיקה ותושבי אתרי הדיוור הזמני. הסיוע יהיה על ידי מענקים מוחלטים ומענקים מותנים, הלוראות עם ריבית מסובסדת והצמדה חלקית וסיוע בשכר דירה לעולים ולוותיקים. הסיוע בשכר דירה למיעוטי הכנסה העונים על מבחני הכנסה ומשוכרים בדיוור ציבורי על פי מבחני יכולת כלכליים.

■ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך ותפעיל את התכניות לשיפור **איכות חייהם** של תושבי **השכונות**. הממשלה תמשיך ותקצה משאבים לשיפור והרחבת דירות, שיפור חיצוני, שיפור רחובות, גנים ציבוריים ואזוריים, שיפור תוכניות שכונתיות וכו'. כל זאת תוך שיתוף התושבים וההשקעות בפעילות חברתית וקהילתית, להפחתת רמת התלות וחיווק החוסן והמרחב החברתי בשכונות.

■ תימשך **העדמה המתקנת** בהקצאת המשאבים לחנוך באזורים בהם מרוכזות הקבוצות החלשות. תימשך ההפעלה הסלקטיבית של **יום הלימודים הארוך** באזורי העדיפות הלאומית ובשכונות המצוקה, יינתנו תוספת שעות לימוד ויופעלו

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פרויקטים חינוכיים מיוחדים כגון טיפול בקשיי למידה וחינוך מיוחד, יופעלו תוכניות למשיכת מורים מצטיינים לאזורי העדיפות הלאומית על ידי מתן תנאי שכר מיוחדים. תימשך הגדלת הקצאת המשאבים לחינוך הערבי, הדרוזי והבדואי מתוך מגמה לצמצום פערים בין ההקצאות למגזרים השונים.

■ העבודה רואה בהבטחת **תעסוקה** לכל דורש וביכולת להתפרנס בכבוד זכות יסוד של כל תושב. הממשלה בראשות העבודה, 1. תשמור על רמת תעסוקה גבוהה על ידי מדיניות כלכלית תומכת והקצאת משאבים להשקעות בתשתית ובמחקר ובפיתוח. 2. תיגור במסלולי הסיוע הקיימים לקידום תעסוקת עולים בתקופת הסתגלותם לחיים חדשים בארץ. (ראה להלן, בפרק על העולים).

■ העבודה רואה ב**שירותי הדת** שירותים חיוניים לרווחת כל האזרחים מכל המגזרים ומכל הדתות ולשם כך הממשלה תמשיך ותפעל. 1. להשקיע מאמצים בשיפור שירותי הדת ייעם הפנים לקהלי ולהביא את שירותי הדת לרמת מנהל יעילה ומודרנית. 2. לתת מענים מתאימים לציבור המסורתי והחילוני לשירותי דת. 3. לקדם גישה שוויונית מעשית ללא משוא פנים בשירותי דת ובשרותיהם של בתי הדין הרבניים.

■ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך בשיפור מעמדם ואיכות חייהם של **הגמלאים** במדינה על ידי. 1. מתן ייצוג לגמלאים במוסדות ממלכתיים והסתדרותיים. 2. ביטוי כבוד והערכה למעולם של האנשים המבוגרים בעבר ולעידוד פעילותם היוצרת והתרומת גם בעתיד. 3. הרחבת השירותים החברתיים והקהילתיים עבור האוכלוסייה המבוגרת כגון: מרכזי יום, בתי אבות, אזורי דיור מוגן וכו'. 4. הרחבה והתאמה של שירותי הבריאות לצרכי הגמלאים במשא אשפוז סיעודי ומחירי התרומות. 5. הבטחת מנסיח שתאפשר חיים בכבוד לשכיר ולעצמאי, תוך שמירה על הערך הריאלי של רמת הגימלה.

■ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך במחויבותה המעשית למימוש שוויון הזכויות בין המינים. הממשלה תפעל להשגת מטרה זו בכל התחומים ובכל מגזרי החברה הישראלית באמצעות:

1. מערכת החינוך על כל רמותיה ושלביה, בצה"ל, בתקשורת ובחקיקה.
2. הכללת נשים בכל מוקדי ההכרעה והגדלת ייצוגן בכל מערכות השלטון.
3. שאיפה לזכויות שוות לעבודת נשים וגברים וקידום נשים לתפקידי ניהול.
4. התקדמות ביישום החוק למניעת אלימות במשפחה וחוק משפחות חד הוריות.
5. בחינת האפשרות להכרה בהוצאות טפול הילדים ומשק הבית כהוצאה מוכרת לצרכי מס.

■ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לסיוע וקידום המגזרים הבאים:

1. **זוגות צעירים:** מעולה נמרצת להבטחת הזדמנויות למשפחות צעירות לבנות את עתידן על ידי: הכשרה מקצועית, סיוע ברכישת השכלה אקדמאית, סיוע בדיוור ובתחום התעסוקה.
2. **משפחות ברוכות ילדים:** המשכת הפעולה לפיתוח הזכויות והשירותים עבור ההורים והילדים על ידי: סיוע בחינוך גילאי 3 עד 5 באזורי עדיפות לאומית ושכונות מצוקה, הקלות בתשלומים למשפחות נזקקות במערכות החינוך והמערכות העירוניות.
3. **נכים ומוגבלים:** ראה להלן, בפרק נפרד.

ההסתדרות הכללית החדשה והעובדים בישראל

■ מפלגת העבודה רואה בהסתדרות הכללית החדשה תנועה חברתית המייצגת את האינטרסים של העובדים והנימולאים בישראל, המניחה על התהליכים לשמירה על חברה שוויונית וצודקת.

■ מפלגת העבודה רואה את מושג העבודה כערך חברתי מעבר למשמעויות הכלכליות שבכך. לכל אדם זכות יסוד לעבודה ופרנסה הוגנים. הממשלה בראשות העבודה פעלה בשנים האחרונות בהצלחה להורדת היקף האבטלה ושיפור בתנאי העסקה במגזרים רבים. מפלגת העבודה תמשיך ותפעל:

1. להפחית נוספת בהיקף האבטלה ומתן פתרונות נקודתיים לפיתוח תעסוקה ולמניעת אבטלה במיוחד באזורי סיכון לאבטלה גבוהה (מריפרייה ועירויות פיתוח).
2. להרחבת ההכשרה המקצועית והשתלמויות העובדים, תוך התאמה לשוק העבודה המודרני.
3. למדיניות **שכר** המכבדת את העובד ומשפרתו.
4. העבודה רואה במנגנון תוספת היוקר הקיים כלי מרכזי במערכת השכר ויחסי העבודה ותתמוך בהמשך קיומו באופן שיהיה מבוסס על הסכם בין ההסתדרות החדשה לבין ארגוני המעסיקים.

■ מפלגת העבודה רואה בהעסקת עובדים זרים פתרון של הכרח ארצי בלבד לצרכי שוק העבודה העכשוויים. הממשלה תפעל:

1. לצמצום הכרח של העסקת עובדים זרים בישראל.
2. לתנאי שכר ותנאי חיים הוגנים של העובדים הזרים ולחתימת הסכמים המסדירים את תנאי עבודתם, שלא יהפכו לכלי המונע בשכר העובדים הישראליים.
3. שלא יועסקו עובדים זרים, במקום עובדים שוכנים.

■ ממשלת העבודה רואה בהסתדרות הארגון היוציג הגדול ביותר של העובדים ותתייעץ עם ההסתדרות לפני חקיקה או פעולה הנוגעת לעובדים.

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- ממשלת העבודה תשמוץ על שכר המינימום ותבחן אפשרות להגדילו.
- ממשלת העבודה תכניס תיקונים בחוק הגנת השכר וחוק הסכמים קיבוציים להסדרת יחסי העבודה במשק, שיאפשרו את פעילותם ומימונם של ארגוני העובדים בישראל.
- העבודה תפעל לחקיקת חוק יסודי: זכויות חברתיות של האדם ברוח ערכיה של ישראל כמדינה דימוקרטית מושתתת על ערכי השוויון, הצדק החברתי והערכות ההדדיות.
- העבודה תפעל להבטיח בחוק יסוד את זכות העובדים להתארגן ולשבות, ואת זכותם של ארגוני עובדים יציגים להתקשר בהסכמים קבוציים, לרבות הזכות למידע, ואת זכות ארגוני העובדים למינון.
- העבודה תעשה להגנת שכרו של העובד.
- ייעשה מאמץ לצמצום מער ההכנסות הקיים בין העשירונים העליונים לעשירונים הנמוכים.
- תוענק הגנה על העובדים בעת המרטה.
- מפלגת העבודה מכירה בהסתדרות הכללית החדשה כגוף הגדול והמייצג את מירב העובדים למקצועותיהם במישור הארצי והמקומי.
- סיעת העבודה בכנסת תיפעל לחקיקת חוקים ותקנות תוך שיתוף פעולה עם ההסתדרות החדשה, כדי להבטיח את זכויות העובדים ועבודה מאורגנת.
- מפלגת העבודה רואה בשרות התעסוקה, את הגוף הממלכתי המרכזי, העוסק בגיוס, הכוונה והשמת כח אדם בכל מגורי העבודה בישראל, ותפעל ליישול ושיפור שרות התעסוקה, כדי להתאים את שרותיו לשוק העבודה המודרני ובגישה אוהדת לעובדים.

חינוך

■ השגיה הגדולים של הממשלה היוצאת בתחום החינוך ישמשו בסיס ומנוף להתקדמות ולשינויים לקראת שנת 2000.

הממשלה בהנהגת מפלגת העבודה תפתח מערכת חינוך מודנית באיכות גבוהה לבני כל השכבות בציבור, המבוססת על אחריות-המדינה ועל שוויון הזדמנויות.

מערכת החינוך בכל מגזריה תהווה בית-יוצר ליחד הישראלי, ותטפח את הזהויות היחודיות של משתתפיה, תוך כינונו של רב-שיח בין תרבותי, ומפגש השונים כאורח חיים מתמיד.

מפלגת העבודה תפעל בתחום החינוך על-יסוד העקרונות שלהלן:

א. חוק-יסוד החינוך

חוקי החינוך המועטים והמרכזיים ייבחנו מחדש, לאור השינויים שהתחוללו בחברה ובמשק. תחומים מרכזיים הראויים לחקיקה, כמו מטרות-החינוך, המשותפות והיחודיות, התכנים הלימודיים והחינוכיים, ומימוש הזכות לחינוך מעולה לכל - ירוכזו ב"חוק החינוך", בהתאם למגילת העצמאות ולעקרונותיה.

ב. אחריות, ביזור ואוטונומיה

תעשה אבחנה שיטתית ומסודרת בין ענייני-חינוך מרכזיים שהמדינה חייבת לטוּט כלי לסגת מחובותיה ואחריותה להם, לבין ענייני-חינוך בעלי אופי אזורי ומקומי, ולבין ענייני-חינוך שראויה להם האוטונומיה של המוסד החינוכי.

ג. החינוך הציבורי

על כל מוסד חינוכי שתקציבו ניוון במישרין או בעקיפין מקופת-הציבור תחול החובה לקלוט תלמידים ללא מיון, על פי הפנייה ציבורית, ולהביאם לסיום מלא של חוק-לימודיהם.

ד. מימון החינוך ושוויון הזדמנויות

שוויון הזדמנויות בחינוך הוא כלי מרכזי להקטנת פערים חברתיים ולקיצוץ של חברה מתוקנת. תימשך התעדפה המתקנת בהקצאת המשאבים לחינוך

באזורים בהם מרוכזות הקבוצות החלשות; תימשך ההפעלה הסלקטיבית של יום הלימודים הארוך באזורי העדיפות הלאומית ושכונות המצוקה. ייטענו תוספות שעות לימוד ויופעלו פרויקטים חנוכיים מיוחדים כגון טיפול בקשיי למידה וחנך מיוחד. הממשלה תמשיך בהקצאת המשאבים לחנך בישובים הערביים והדרוזיים מתוך מגמה לצמצום הפערים בין ההקצאות למגזרים השונים.

ה. דמוקרטיזציה של החינוך

חובת החינוך בכלל, ומניעת האפשרות מן ההורים לבדל את ילדיהם מילדי אחרים, מחייבת במקביל להגדיל את משקלה של השתתפות-ההורים והשתתפותם של תלמידים-בוגרים בענייני המוסד החינוכי. ממשלת העבודה תפעל למיסוד מחייב של השתתפות ההורים והשתתפותם של תלמידים-בוגרים במסגרת האוטונומיה של המוסד החינוכי, ולהסדרה בחוק של מעמד נציגויות ההורים לדרגותיהן.

ו. הסרוגניות, פלורליזם, וחינוך לדמוקרטיה

תמשך, תשוכלל ותתרחב מדיניות חינוך לאומית המחייבת הרכב אוכלוסיית-תלמידים הסרוגני בכיתות ובבתי-הספר, הן כערך לאומי חברתי וחינוכי, והן כאמצעי מרכזי לשיוון-ההודמנויות ולאזנות גבוהה. החינוך לפלורליזם ולדמוקרטיה יוכל להתקיים רק על בסיס ההסרוגניות, כאורח חיים וכדוגמה חיה.

ז. מחות תלמידים בכיתה

מפלגת העבודה חוללה שינוי מפליג בהשקעה הלאומית בחינוך, שחלק נכבד ממנה הופנה להארכת יום הלימודים. הממשלה בהנהגת מפלגת העבודה תמשיך במהלך זה, תוך הקפדה על השקעה דו-פרגנואלית לפי שיקולים חברתיים. במסגרת ההשקעות לקראת שנות ה-2000, יוקטן מספר התלמידים המיוזבי בכיתה. כל השינויים יבוצעו תוך מתן קדימות לישובים, אזורים, ומוסדות חינוך הפועלים בתנאים קשים, ובכללם ערי הפיתוח, ישובי קו-העיסות, השכונות, ריכוזי העולים, והמגזר הערבי והדרוזי.

ח. השקעה במורים

המורים הם המפתח לכל קידום בחינוך. הממשלה היוצאת חוללה מפנה

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באקדמיזציה של המורים ובהשתלמותם. מפלגת העבודה תמשיך בפעולה לשיפור כמותי ואיכותי של הכשרת המורים, במגמה להגדיל משמעותית את מאגר המורים הטובים בישראל. לאחר השלמת הצעד שמנע את ההדורות בשכר-המורים בשנים האחרונות, תיבדק האפשרות לשיפור נוסף בשכרם היחסי של המחנכים בישראל.

ט. תנועות נוער

מפלגת העבודה תעמיד את תנועות-הנוער, כאחת מיצירותיה החינוכיות היחודיות של ישראל, במרכז החינוך הבלתי-פורמלי. הממשלה בהנהגת מפלגת העבודה תכפיל את הקף פעולתן של תנועות-הנוער, תוך שילוב כל השכבות באוכלוסייה, ובכלל זה בני-הנוער העולים החדשים.

חינוך גבוה ומדע

■ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך למעול להקצאת משאבים הולמים לחינוך הגבוה, על מנת להעלות את מעמדה המדעי והטכנולוגי של ישראל, למשוך מדענים אליה, ולמנוע בריחת מוחות ממנה.

■ העבודה תפעל ליישום מדיניות טכנולוגית לאומית. שתתבסס על התמרת הידע המדעי אקדמי לממשות טכנולוגית, אשר תהווה בסיס לתעשייה מתקדמת בעלת משמעות כלכלית מרכזית. לשם כך יש להבטיח:

1. יצירת תמריצים כלכליים למחקר מדעי בגיהול משותף עם גורמי תעשייה והקמתם של מרכזים לאומיים למחקר ולטכנולוגיה.
2. יצירת כלים תמריציים כלכליים לפיתוח יוזמות חדשות ויכולת תעשייתית בכל תחומי הטכנולוגיות המתקדמות ובמיוחד, יצירת שותפויות עיסקיות עם חברות ורות, במטרה להבטיח את שילובה של ישראל בכלכלה העולמית.
3. הממשלה תפעל להרחבה והקמה של מוסדות להשכלה על תיכונית בעיירות הפיתוח. בהתיישבות הכפרית, כשלוחות של מכוני המדע והמחקר הגבוהים, במגמה ליצירת מצב בו כל בוגר תיכון יוכל לרכוש השכלה אקדמית. כדי לממש יעד זה תפעל המפלגה להענקת סיוע לסטודנטים הזקוקים לכך.

■ הממשלה תפעל להקמה הדרגתית של מכללות חדשות בפיקוח המועצה להשכלה גבוהה ולהרחבת החינוך הגבוה. כמו כן תפעל להכרה בתואר שיושג במכללות.

■ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תשאף להקל על תנאי הקבלה למוסדות החינוך העל תיכוניים, ותחזק את מעמד הסטודנטים במוסדות ההשכלה הגבוהה, באופן שתובטח:

1. שמירת זכויות הסטודנטים מבחינה אקדמית וסוציו-אקדמית.
2. קביעת שכר לימוד הוגן בכל מוסדות ההשכלה הגבוהה, תוך הבטחת מילגות לנזרכים.
3. מתן משכנתאות לשכר לימוד לסטודנטים הזקוקים לכך.
4. מיסוד יחסי סטודנטים - הנהלת המוסד האקדמי, כך שלסטודנטים תהיה נציגות בקבלת החלטות במוסדות האקדמיים.

ספורט וחינוך גופני

משרד החינוך, באמצעות רשות הספורט, ימשיך בהרחבת פעילות ההתאחדות לספורט בבתי הספר, להעמקת בניית תשתית הספורט בכל שכבות הגיל של מערכת החינוך.

ימשיך תהליך היציאה לעצמאות של האיגודים וההתאחדויות, ובניית מתקני ספורט בכל רחבי הארץ, לעידוד הפעילות הספורטיבית והפעילות העממית לתרבות הפנאי והמפגש הפעיל.

הגיוס לצה"ל, החיילים המשוחררים והדור הצעיר

- גיוס חובה לנשים כגברים הוא מיסודות האורחות והבטחון של המדינה.
- דחיית השירות הצבאי המקיפה היום רבבות צעירים, מפלה בין אזרחי המדינה ויש לה השפעה מוסרית על הצעירים המתגייסים.
- העבודה תפעל לתיקון המעוות לשוויון חובות ושוויון זכויות בין אזרחי המדינה.
- העבודה מציינת לחיוב את הניסיון המוצלח של שילוב לימוד תורה ושירות צבאי במסגרת ישיבות ההסדר.
- תימשך המעולה החשובה לשילובן של חילות במונחן מקצועות ותפקידים נרחב.
- ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לביצוע חוק השירות הלאומי תשי"ג-1953 במטרה להטיל על הבנות הפטורות משירות צבאי חובת שירות לאומי מקביל בתחומי קליטת העליה, חינוך, בריאות ורווחה.
- ממשלה בראשות העבודה תעשה למתיחת שיערי מוסדות ההשכלה הגבוהה ובתי הספר המקצועיים בפני הצעירים המעוניינים ללמוד (ראה תת פרק "חינוך נבוה ומדעי").
- הממשלה תפעל באופן נמרץ ליצירת מקומות תעסוקה לצעירים, ליכולת הצעירים להתפרנס בכבוד ולמיושם זכותם לדיור הולם (ראה תת פרק "תעסוקה והכשרה מקצועית" ו"שיכון").

- העבודה תפעל על פי חוק החיילים המשוחררים שהוקקה שיבטיח זכויות לכל חייל משוחרר בתחומי התעסוקה, הדיוור, ההשכלה וההכשרה המקצועית. חוק זה יבטיח:
1. מתן עדיפויות לחיילים המשוחררים בצעדיהם הראשונים לאחר השחרור ומניעת ירידתם מהארץ.
 2. אפשרויות מעשיות לביסוס מעמדם הכלכלי, כדי לחזק את מעמדם החברתי ולהבטיח עתידם במדינה.
 3. הקמת מכשיר כספי שיבטיח בתוקף הוראות החוק את יכול המימוש של זכויות החייל המשוחרר.
 4. זכותו של חייל משוחרר לחזור למקום העבודה בו עבד לפני גיוסו.
 5. סיוע לחייל משוחרר בהשתלמות מקצועית ובהשלמת לימודי הברור.
- הממשלה תפעל לשפור מצבם של הסטודנטים כסקטור בפני עצמו, ולקביעת שכר לימוד הוגן.
- הממשלה תדאג לכך שמחוסרי יכולת יוכלו ללמוד במוסדות ההשכלה הגבוהה ובמכללות על-ידי העמדת מילגות והלוואות לרשותם.

דמוקרטיה וממשל

■ רצח ראש הממשלה יצחק רבין ז"ל היה נסיון להתנקש בדמוקרטיה הישראלית ולהחליף את הבריעת הרוב באקדח היחיד, על רקע הסתה נמשכת נגד הלגיטימיות של ממשלת ישראל. ממשלה בראשות העבודה תעשה לביצור ערכי הדמוקרטיה, להגברת החינוך לדמוקרטיה ולחיווק ויצוב הדמוקרטיה בישראל.

■ העבודה הובילה את הליך הבחירה האישית של ראש הממשלה, עמדה על יישומה, והיא תמשיך למעול לשינוי שיטת הבחירות לכנסת, לפיה חלק מחברי הכנסת ייבחרו באזורים תוך שמירה על עקרון הייצוג היחסי בכנסת. לקחי הבחירה הישירה והפריימריס ייבחנו להסקת מסקנות.

■ העבודה תעשה להשלמת החוקה וחקיקת חוקי היסוד החסדים לשמירת מעמדו של בית המשפט העליון כבית-משפט לחוקה.

■ העבודה תפעל לבחינתן ההדרגתית של תקנות ההגנה (שעת חרום) מתקופת המנדט ותקנות ישראליות לשעת חירום ולהחליפן בחקיקה הישראלית.

■ העבודה תשקיע משאבים ללא תקדים בפיתוח מערכת בתי-משפט. במבנים ובכוח אדם, והיא תמשיך הריפורמה בבתי המשפט תוך שמירה על עצמאות הרשות השיפוטית.

■ נמשיך ברפורמה במינהל הציבורי, במגמה להיטיב את השרות לאזרח, לפשט תהליכים בירוקרטיים ולהעמיק את מודעות השירות הציבורי לחובתו לשרת את הציבור.

■ נמשיך לעשות למניעת פוליטיזציה במינהל הציבורי ולהבטחת מעמדם הממלכתי של עובדי הציבור ולשפור תנאי עבודתם במסגרת התקציב המאושר.

■ נפעל לעגן את זכות הציבור לדעת בחוק ונמשיך להבטיח את חופש העתונות ולעגן בחוק את חסיון העתונאי.

- נבטיח הלכה למעשה שהכל יהיו שווים בפני החוק וכי לא יופלה אדם בישראל מטעמי מין, דת, לאום, נזע, עדה, ארץ מוצא, גיל, נטייה מינית, או הורות.
- ניתן עדיפות לאכיפת החוק, למאבק בכל תופעות האלימות ובכלל זה האלימות במשפחה והאלימות על רקע מיני. תשומת לב מיוחדת ניתן למאבק בתאונות הדרכים, בסוחריו הסמים ובכל תופעות השחיתות.
- נקפיד על התנהגות שליחי המפלגה בשירות הציבורי על פי נורמות נאותות ונדרוש מהם לתת דוגמא אישית במילוי תפקידם.
- הממשלה תדון בדו"ח מבקרת המדינה ותפיק תקחים מהבקורת ותפעל לתיקון הליקויים, למינהל תקין ולעקירת תופעות השחיתות.

מעמד האשה

העבודה מחוייבת למימוש השוויון בין המינים במשפחה בתעסוקה ובחברה ותפעל להשגתו בכל התחומים ובכל מנורי החברה הישראלית, באמצעות מערכת החינוך על כל רמותיה ושלביה, לרבות בצבא, בתקשורת לסוגיה, בחקיקה ובהקניית כלים לאכיפתה, וכן באמצעות הגדלת מספרן של נשים במוקדי הכרעה.

העבודה תפעל לאשרור האמנה הבינלאומית לביעור כל סוגי האפליה נגד נשים.

העבודה מברכת על הקמתה של הועדה למעמד האישה בכנסת. העבודה תפעל להרחבת סמכויותיה של ועדה זאת.

ממשלת העבודה תפעל לבדיקת תלונות ציבור בנושא השוויון בין המינים במסגרת חוק מבקר המדינה.

ממשלת העבודה תבחן הקמתה של רשות מרכזית למעמד האשה ולטיפול בנושא האלימות נגד נשים, על מנת להתמודד עם הבעיה, הן לעיבוי רשת המרכזים לסיוע ולפגנות תקיפה מינית, הן להקמת מקלטים נוספים לנשים מוכות, והן לתכניות הכשרה, הדרכה, והגברת מודעות בקרב הנורמים הממלכתיים העוסקים בנושא ומשטרה, פקיד סעד, נופים שימוטיים, מערכת החינוך, רשויות מקומיות וכיו"ב.

ממשלת העבודה תפעל לשוויון בין המינים בשוק העבודה, ובכלל זה:

1. ישום התכנית להעדפה מתקנת בשרות הציבורי, והרחבתה לגבי נופים המקבלים כספי מדינה, לרבות ישום תכנית כואת כאחד הקריטריונים לזכיה במכרזים.
 2. אכיפה מוגברת של חוק שכר שווה לעובד ולעובדת ושל חוק שוויון הזדמנויות בתעסוקה.
 3. להכרה בהוצאות לצורך טיפול בילדים כהוצאה מוכרת לצורך יצירת הכנסה.
- העבודה תבחן המשך מתן הטבות למשפחות חד-הוריות ולשינוי הוראות הביטוח הלאומי, כך שמבחינה ההכנסה יהיו רחבים יותר וגם נשים עובדות תוכלנה לקבל תשלומי מזונות.

ממשלת העבודה תוסיף להקצות משאבים להחדרת ערך השוויון בין המינים

לתכניות הלימודים בכל רמות החינוך.

העבודה תתנגד לכל קצור נוסף של שרות חובה לנשים בלבד.

ממשלת העבודה תפעל למתיחת יותר מקצועות צבאיים בפני נשים, תוך ליווי והדרכה בקרב מפקדים ופקודים לגבי ערך השוויון בין המינים.

העבודה תפעל למעורבות נשים בקידום תהליך השלום, בשרות החוץ ובשירותי הבטחון של ישראל.

העבודה תפעל לתבונן מדיניות תעסוקה ארוכת טווח המתבססת על חקר השוק ומגמות עתידיות, שתקח בחשבון תעסוקת הנשים, הכשרתן המקצועית וקידומן.

העבודה תבחן את האפשרות למתן קצבאות ונקודות זיכוי בגין ילדים עד גיל 21 או עד תום שרות צבאי או שירות לאומי.

ממשלת העבודה תחזק את מעמדם של בתי הדין למשפחה, ולא תאפשר להרחיב את סמכויותיהם של בתי הדין הרבניים או לצמצום פיקוח בגיץ עליהם.

העבודה תפעל למתן פתרונות בנושאים דוגמת חליצה, עניינות, מוגיץ חיתון, גירושין, והפקעת נישואין.

העבודה תפעל להגנת זכויות הידועות בציבור בנושאים כגון: ענייני משכנתאות, תכניות פנסיה, קיצבאות שאירים וכירוב.

העבודה תפעל ליצוגן של נשים במועצות הדתיות.

ממשלת העבודה תבחן את האפשרות להקים נוף מקצועי במסגרת משרד הבריאות על מנת לבחון סוגיות בנושאי בריאות האישה. בצד סוגיות מקובלות כגון ניקולוגים, מיילדות ובריאות האם והילד, יש לכלול מחלות שכירות אצל נשים, וכן מחלות שבהן יש שוני בין המינים, הבחינה תלויה במתן המלצות לגבי הכללת שרותים נוספים ביסל בריאות.

ממשלת העבודה תפעל להגברת מעורבותן ושיתופן של נשים במדיניות התכנון, על מנת ליתן ביטוי לצרכיהן.

העבודה תפעל לקידום נשים בענפי הספורט השונים.

השלטון המקומי

ממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך לפעול לשינוי יחסי הנגמול בין השלטון המרכזי לשלטון המקומי ותביא לרפורמה שמגמותיה העיקריות:

1. יצירת מערכת שלטונית רציפה שבה הרשויות המקומיות עומדות עם הפנים לתושב במגמה להעניק לו מיטב השרותים בכל תחומי החיים: חינוך, חברה, רווחה, איכות סביבה, תחבורה וכו'.
2. הפחתת נטל המיסים הישיר והעקיף המוטל על התושבים על ידי הרשויות המקומיות; הפחתה זו תושג על ידי התייעלות הרשויות המקומיות באמצעות איחוד רשויות מבחינה כלכלית, תקציבית, וארגונית.
3. יוגדרו אזורי עדימות לאומית למען ביזור האוכלוסייה ומתן תעסוקה תוך חיזוק ישובי הספר וישובי הכיתור.
4. תעשה אבחנה ארגונית ותחיקתית שתביא להפרדה בין תפקידי חקיקה של מועצת הרשות המקומית לתפקידי הביצוע המוטלים על המערכת השלטונית המקומית.
5. פרטי הסיוע הכספי של הממשלה לרשויות המקומיות תהיה גלויה, פומבית ותחשף לבקרה ציבורית.
6. תוענקנה סמכויות נרחבות יותר לרשויות המקומיות בכל הנוגע למקרקעין המדינה ושינוי יעוד קרקע תוך הרחבת סמכויות בתחום חוק התכנון והבניה.

מערכת הבריאות

ממשלת העבודה תתן לנושא הבריאות מקום גבוה בסדר העדיפויות הלאומי. העבודה רואה במתן שירותי בריאות טובים לכל אזרח את אחת מזכויות היסוד הבסיסיות ודרך חברתי ראשון במעלה.

ממשלת העבודה תמשיך ביישום חוק ביטוח בריאות ממלכתי המעניק סל שרותים רפואיים מתקדמים ומלאים לכל אזרח, ללא קשר לרמת הכנסתו ולמקום מגוריו. ממשלת העבודה תיישם את כל הלקחים משנתו הראשונה של חוק זה ותתקן בחקיקה את כל החסרונות שהתגלו בו.

ממשלת העבודה תדאג שאזרחי ישראל יוכלו להנות מכל חידושי הרפואה העולמית, כך שתשמר תוחלת החיים הגבוהה ורמתה הגבוהה של הרפואה הישראלית המאפשרת זאת.

ממשלת העבודה תעודד את הניהול העצמי היעיל בבתי החולים הממשלתיים והציבוריים, ואת הניצול היעיל של מתקניהם וציודם.

ממשלת העבודה תבצע בשלבים את תכנית האשפוז הלאומית שתכליתה להתאים את שירותי בתי החולים הציבוריים לנידול אוכלוסיית ישראל והזדקנותה ולהפחית את הצפיפות בהם.

במהלך כהונתה תפתור הממשלה את בעיית האשפוז הסייעודי ותביא לחיסול תור הממתינים לאשפוז זה.

איכות הסביבה

איכות החיים תלויה באיכות הסביבה בקשר הכרחי וקיומי.

ממשלת ישראל בראשות העבודה תקדם את שיקולי איכות הסביבה למקומם הראוי בהליכי קבלת ההחלטות בכל המגזרים והרמות במשק.

הממשלה תפעל לשמירת דמות נקי הארץ וחיווק מעמד של **השטחים הפתוחים** הממשלה תורה לבדוק את ההשלכות הסביבתיות בטרם קבלת החלטות להקמת מפעלי תעשייה או שכונות מגורים. מצד הממשלה יעשה מאמץ לשימוש חסכוני בקרקע ומתן עדיפות לשימוש בקרקע מפותחת (מתוח מערכות עירוניות קיימות והרוויות הבנוי בתחום השטח המכונה). כמו כן, הממשלה תקפיד על שמירת **ראות ירוקות** באזורי בנייה רוויים.

הממשלה תפעל למתוח דרום הארץ והגליל במגמה להקל על צפיפות האוכלוסיה במישור החוף ועל לחצי הפיתוח בנוף הפתוח במרכז הארץ.

יושם דגש מיוחד מצד הממשלה לפיתוח התחבורה הציבורית ושיפור הניידות בין צפון דרום ומרכז הארץ. פיתוח הכבישים ודרכי התעבורה יעשה תוך התחשבות **בערכי הטבע, הנוף והסביבה**.

קביעת נפח פעילותו העתידי של שדה התעופה בן גוריון תתחשב בהשלכות הסביבתיות על תושבי מרכז הארץ. בתכנון השדה תינתן עדיפות לחלופות הממחיתות את המפגעים.

הממשלה תייחס חשיבות רבה למניעת **זיהום המים**. יוגדל ניצולם של מי קולחין לחקלאות. לניצול עירוני ולתעשייה. הממשלה תפעל להפיכתם של הנחלים למרחבים ירוקים המיועדים לשמורות טבע אחרי נופש ותיירות.

הממשלה תפעל לצמצום **זיהום האוויר** ממוקדי תעשייה, תחנת כוח, תחבורה וחקלאות ותיווץ מעבר לכלי תעבורה המונעים באנרגיה טבעית.

הממשלה תפעל למתרון משולב של בעיית **הפסולת** במתן תמריצים כלכליים ליוזמים פרטיים לצורך הקמת תעשיות למתרון משולב להפחתת הפסולת למיחזור לשריפה ולהטמנה.

הממשלה תבחן ותפעל למציאת פתרונות בטוחים לאחסונים והובלתם של **חומרים דליקים** ומוזהמי סביבה.

הממשלה תבחן באופן מעמיק יוזמות **פיתוח החוף** והמרינות מתוך מודעות כי חוף הים בישראל הוא משאב מוגבל. חופי הים ישמרו לציבור הרחב בנישה חופשית וברמת ניקיון ותברואה גבוהים.

הממשלה תעשה מאמץ הסברתי ותחוקק חוקי הגנה מקרינה ועישון.

הממשלה תבחן איך לקדם חקיקה סביבתית ותקנות המיישמות ומעגנות עקרונות סביבתיים, ובכלל זה - חוק להגנה על השטחים הפתוחים, חוק המבטיח גנישות למידע סביבתי, תקנות תסקירי השפעה על הסביבה, תקנות מיחזור, תקני רעש, זיהום אוויר, וכיו"ב.

הממשלה תתמוך בעידוד **שימור אתרים** כחלק ממורשת הארץ.

הממשלה תפעל לחיזוקו של המשרד לאיכות הסביבה שיהוו מרם מרכזי בתכנון, כמו כן תעודד רשויות ציבוריות המניטות על איכות הסביבה.

דת מדינה

העבודה, מוקירה ומכבדת את מורשת היהדות, שקיימה את עם ישראל דרך כל נדודיו וגלויותיו והיתה גורם מכריע בחידוש זהותו הלאומית.

הרב-גוונים הדתית במדינת ישראל תובטח בכוח מגילת העצמאות המבטיחה שוויון, סובלנות וחופש הבחירה. מתוך שאיפה לאחדות ישראל תחתור העבודה לכך שחקיקה בנושאי דת תתבסס על הסכמה רחבה בעם. באין הסכמה רחבה כזו לשינויי חקיקה, תשמור העבודה על סטטוס קוו בנושאי דת.

מתוך כבוד לאמונה הדתית, ממשלת העבודה תקפיד ששרותים דתיים ינתנו לכל אדם לפי צרכיו ואמונתו, לכל גווניהן של הדתות השונות, ללא השפעת זיקות פוליטיות או אחרות.

ממשלת העבודה תבחן הקמת רשות לאומית שתעסוק בהעמקת החינוך לתודעה יהודית ולמורשת ישראל, הן בארץ והן בתפוצות. רשות זו תעסוק במכלול הסוגיות של היחסים בתוך העם היהודי, יחסי ישראל-תפוצה, ובמציאת פתרונות נאותים להמשכיותה של הזהות היהודית.

בכפוף לאמור לעיל, העבודה דוגלת בפלוראליזם דתי בישראל, המבוסס על עקרונות מגילת העצמאות, של כל הדתות במדינה ושל כל הזרמים בכל דת.

הממשלה תמשיך לפעול למציאת פתרונות לקבוצה אלטרנטיבית.

עליה וקליטה

- יימשכו המאמצים להבאתם ארצה של כל יהודי העולם הרוצים בכך.
- תיבחן האפשרות לעצב מרויקט לאומי חדש, שבמסגרתו יגיעו ארצה כל צעירה וצעיר יהודיים לביקור קיץ במימון העם היהודי. הכוונה תהא מתיחת אופציה לעליה בהיקף משמעותי יותר גם מארצות הרווחה.
- מאמץ מיוחד יוקדש להבאתם של יהודי חבר העמים לישראל. ככל שתעמיק תחושת הצלחת הקליטה בארץ, כך יגדל הסיכוי לעליה נוספת.
- ייעשה מאמץ מיוחד לקליטה החומרית. לא תהיה פגיעה בכבוד העולים, וכי תינתן להם האפשרות המירבית למצות את יכולתם, לבטא את עצמם ולשמר את מסורתם, תרבותם ואורחות חייהם. כור ההיתוך הישראלי לא יבוא לידי ביטוי במחיקת עברם של העולים אלא בשילובם בחייה של ישראל.
- הובטחה תעסוקה לרובם המכריע של העולים. אך רובם אינם עובדים במקצועותיהם. במהלך הקדנציה הבאה ייעשה מאמץ להתאים את עבודת העולים למקצועותיהם.
- הממשלה תיעזר במסלולי הסיוע הקיימים לקידום תעסוקת עולים בתקופת הסתגלותם לחיים חדשים בארץ, כמפורט בפרק חברה וכלכלה. לעיל. הממשלה תסייע לעולים למצוא תעסוקה ופרנסה.
- ייעשה טיפול כולל בבעיותיהם של העולים הקשישים, ובכלל זה הגדלה משמעותית של מספר יחידות הדיור בהוסטלים לקשישים.
- תיבחן האפשרות להעניק משכנתאות בתנאים נוחים לאוכלוסיות החלשות בקרב העולים.
- הממשלה תמשיך בסיוע לעולים במציאת פתרונות דיור, על-ידי מתן מענקים, כמפורט בפרק חברה וכלכלה. לעיל. הסיוע יהיה על-ידי מענקים מוחלטים ומענקים מותנים, הלוואות עם ריבית מסובסדת והצמדה חלקית וסיוע בשכר דירה לעולים תותיקים. הסיוע בשכר-דירה ינתן לעולים חדשים עד תום השנה החמישית לעלייתם ארצה.
- ה-9 במאי, יום הנצחון של הנאצים, יוכרז כחג לאומי (יום בחירה).

ערביי ישראל

הגשמת השוויון

- הממשלה תמשיך במדיניותה להביא לשוויון מלא ולסגירת פערים בין הישוב היהודי לערבי במדינה.
- הממשלה תמשיך לעשות לשיפור התשתית החנוכית הפיזית במגזר הערבי, לטפח איכות ההוראה, להגדלת מספרים של בעלי תעודות הבגרות ולשילובם של סטודנטים ערביים במוסדות ההשכלה הגבוהה בישראל.
- הממשלה תעשה לשילוב עובדים ערבים במשרדי הממשלה ובמוסדות המדינה, תונהג תכנית של "אפלייה מתקנת" לשילוב המשכילים על פי כישוריהם בעבודה בתחום התמחותם. הממשלה תוסיף לעשות לצמצום האבטלה בישוב הערבי על ידי פיתוח מקורות תעסוקה ופרנסה.
- יימשך המאמץ לפתרון בעיות הדיור, באמצעות הקמת ועדות לתכנון ובנייה בערים ערביות החשש תוכניות מיתאר ומתן היתרי בנייה, והפעלת תכנית בני ביתך בישובים הערביים.
- הממשלה תיישם את המלצות ועדת מרקוביץ לגבי מבנים שובנו ללא רשיון ותמצא פתרון למעיית "40 הכפרים".
- הממשלה תמשיך בפרוייקט שיקום השכונות הערביות.
- הממשלה תזאום השקעות ומעולות לקידום כלכלי של ישובים ערביים בתכנית רב-שנתית.

מימוש היצוג

העבודה העינה ברשימתה לקנסת לפחות שלושה ערבים במקומות בטוחים והיא תעודד את הערבים הישראליים לתפוס את מקומם הראוי במוסדות הפוליטיים, הכלכליים, החברתיים והתרבותיים.

חינוך

הממשלה בראשות העבודה הנדילה את המשאבים לחינוך בקרב האוכלוסיה הערבית והיא תמשיך בהקמת מבנים, כתות לימוד, מעבדות, ספריות ומחשבים, מתקני ספורט, מפעלי תרבות, אמנות ומולקלור בבתי הספר.

שלטון מקומי

■ הממשלה תבחן את נושא שטחי השיפוט של הרשויות המקומיות הערביות במגמה להגדיל את אזורי השיפוט לממדים ההולמים את צרכי האוכלוסיה. הממשלה תפעל להשוות בהדרגה את התקציבים והתקנים של הרשויות הערביות לאלו של הרשויות היהודיות. הממשלה תמשיך במדיניותה להקצות קרקעות מדינה להקמת מוסדות ציבור ביישוב הערבי. הממשלה תעודד את הרשויות המקומיות להכנת תכניות מיתאר ותחיש את אישורן.

■ הממשלה תעשה להקמת ועדות תכנון ובנייה מקומית בכל רשות מקומית ערבית שתושביה מונים 10,000 נפש ומעלה.

קרקעות

■ הממשלה תמשיך בהקצאת קרקעות מדינה למוסדות ולצרכי צבור ביישובים ערבים. הממשלה תפעל במסגרת החוק לפתרון בעיותיהם של יהודים וערבים בעלי הקרקעות שהופקעו לביצוע פרויקט כביש חוצה ישראל.

■ הממשלה תוסיף לבחון את התקונים הנדרשים במיסוי הרכוש.

דת

■ העבודה תבחן מחדש את החוק שהגדיר את הרכוש המוסלמי כרכוש נפקדים ותאפשר לעדה המוסלמית לנהל את רכושה באורח עצמאי בתיקוח המדינה, כפי שרכושן של עדות אחרות מתנהל על ידי ראשיהן או נבחריהן.

■ הממשלה תעשה לשיפור מצבם של בתי הדין השרעיים במדינה.

שפה הערבית

■ הממשלה תפעל כדי שמעמדה הרשמי של השפה הערבית יכובד במשרדי הממשלה ובמוסדות השלטון וכן בשלטי הדרכים.

ספורט

■ הממשלה תעודד את פיתוח ענפי הספורט ביישוב הערבי.

הדרוזים בישראל

■ העבודה מבטיחה באופן עקרוני ושיטתי מקום בכנסת לנציג העדה הדרוזית. בכנסת הקודמת ייצג הנציג הדרוזי את העבודה כסגן שר הפנים וכסגן יו"ר הכנסת.

■ העבודה רואה בעדה הדרוזית בת ברית, הנשאת בעול הכתחול, שיש לעשות לשוויון מלא של בנותיה ובניה במדינת ישראל.

■ הממשלה בראשות העבודה תמשיך לבצע את תכנית השוויון הרב שנתית שלה ותמשיך בהקצאת המשאבים המיוחדת לעדה, כדי להוסיף ולפתור את בעיות התשתית של העיירה הדרוזית, בחינוך, בבנייה, בתעשייה, בחקלאות, בתיירות ובמסחר.

■ הממשלה תמשיך במדיניות הקצאת קרקעות למוסדות ציבור ולפיתוח שירותי הקהילה לבני העדה.

■ הממשלה תבחן את נושא שטחי השיפוט של הרשויות המקומיות הדרוזיות.

■ הממשלה תפעל להפניית יוזמים לכפרים הדרוזיים על מנת ליצור מקומות תעסוקה לצעירים הדרוזים.

■ הממשלה תפעל לסייע לחיילים הדרוזים המשוחררים בדיוור, בהשלמת ההשכלה והכשרה מקצועית, ובשילובם בעבודה.

■ הממשלה תמשיך בשיקום שכונות ביישובים הדרוזים.

■ הממשלה תיישם את המלצות ועדת מרקוביץ' לגבי בתים שנבנו ללא רשיון.

הבדואים בישראל

■ ממשיכה בראשות העבודה תפעול למציאת פתרון הולם לבעיית הקרקעות של הבדואים בנגב. יישם הסדר הקרקעות לבדואים בנגב, תוך התאמת הפיצוי לרמה ריאלית.

■ הממשלה תקים ישובים נוספים וכפרים חקלאיים לאוכלוסיה הבדואית, כדי לאפשר להם למצוא פרנסתם בחקלאות, בתעשייה ובתיירות.

■ הממשלה תעשה לשילובם של צעירים בדואים במוסדות השלטון.

■ הממשלה תפנה משאבים לפיתוח העיירות הבדואיות ולקידום רמת החיים שם ולשיפור איכות החיים שלהם.

■ הממשלה תפעל לפתרון בעיותיהם של הישובים שאינם מוכרים, והחסרים שרותים בסיסיים, בגליל, במשולש ובנגב.

■ הממשלה תקדם את החנוך במגזר הבדואי, תוך שימת לב מיוחדת לגיל הרך ולצעירים, ותגדיל את המשאבים הנדרשים לשם כך.

■ העבודה תפעל למצוא בהקדם פתרון לבעיית הבנייה הבלתי מאושרת של הבדואים, בשיתוף ובתיאום עם נציגי הבדואים, כדי למנוע הרס בתים שניתן לקבל עבורם רשיון, ולמצוא פתרונות דיור חילופי הולם.

הגימלאים והאזרחים הותיקים

מתוך הכרה בתרומתם ובזכויותיהם של הגימלאים והאזרחים הותיקים יזמה ממשלת העבודה את חוק האזרחים הותיקים, אשר תקנה הטבות והנחות משמעותיות לגימלאים.

כמו-כן, החליטה ממשלת העבודה על מתן רשת בטחון אקטוארית מוחלטת לכל גימלאי קרנות הפנסיה, על עדכון הקיצבאות של גמלאי השירות הציבורי, ועל הפחתה משמעותית של תשלומי הבריאות לעומת העבר.

עיקרי היעדים לעתיד

ממשלה בראשות העבודה תפעל לשיפור רמת חייו ובטחונו של הגימלאי בתחומים הבאים:

1. ממשלת העבודה תיזום פעולות למניעת שחיקת הגימלאות התקציביות והמצטברות.
2. הממשלה תפעל במגמה להרחיב את הביטוח הסיעודי, הכללת האשפוז הסיעודי בסל הבסיסי של חוק הביטוח הבריאות והוזלת מחיר התרומות לכלל הגימלאים. במהלך כהונתה תפתור הממשלה את בעיית האשפוז הסיעודי ותביא לחיסול תור הממתנים לאשפוז זה.
3. הממשלה תיזום חיזוק מערכת ביטוח פנסית חובה בצורה שתבטיח פנסיה מקיפה לשכירים ועצמאים.
4. ממשלת העבודה תימנע מכל מגיעה בזכויות הקיימות של הגימלאים. הממשלה תפעל לעדכון הגימלאות ולהכללת מרכיבי שכר נוספים בחישובי הפנסיה.
5. העבודה תפעל להבטחת ייצוג הגימלאים גם במוסדות הממלכתיים והמוניציפליים.
6. ממשלת העבודה תמשיך להרחיב את תרבות הפנאי של הגימלאים, וכן להקים מועדוני גימלאים, מרכזי וים ובתי אבות בסיוע ממלכתי.
7. ממשלת העבודה תדאג להקמת בתי אבות סיעודיים ושיקומיים לתועלתם של הגימלאים.
8. העבודה תחתור לפתרון בעיות השיכון לותיקים ועולים.
9. הממשלה תמשיך לשמור על מדיניות תומכת כלפי ציבור הגימלאים והאזרחים

הוֹתִיקִים.

10. יימשך יישום חוק האזרחים הוותיקים על-ידי תוספת הקלות.
11. הממשלה תפעיל הסדרים לשמירת זכויות הגימלאים בקופות הפנסיה.
12. תבחן האפשרות להעלאת תקרת קיצבת הוויקנה.
13. הממשלה תפעל לחיזוק הסתדרות הגימלאים בישראל כארגון היציג של הגימלאים ותבחן דרכים להוספת אמצעים לקיומה ולהתפתחותה של הסתדרות הגימלאים.

נכים ומוגבלים

■ ממשלה בראשות העבודה תדאג לאנשים הסובלים מהגבלות פיזיות, נכות או פינור, במגמה לאפשר להם לחיות ולפעול כאדם בריא ועצמאי ולא להיות לנטל על המשפחה והחברה.

- הממשלה תמשיך ותפעל למיתוח ושיפור הזכויות והשירותים לאזרחים המוגבלים בגין נכות פיזית, נפשית ושכלית. הממשלה רואה באנשים המוגבלים אזרחים שווים וזכויות, ורואה מחויבות לספק שירותים להם על פי הצרכים המיוחדים. כדי להשיג מטרות אלה תפעל העבודה:
1. לשיפור החקיקה בתחום הטיפול באזרח המוגבל כדי לשלבו בקהילה.
 2. בחינה יסודית של כל הנושאים הקשורים בהסכם נידות של הנכים במטרה לייעל ולפשט תהליכים על מנת למנוע סבל מיותר של הנכים.
 3. למניעת שינוי לרעה בזכויות הנכים והמוגבלים ולשפור מצבו של הנכה.
 4. להבטיח במידת האפשר את הערך הריאלי של קצבאות הנכים.
 5. לדאוג במידת האפשר לסיוע כספי שיאפשר קבלת עזרה לניקיון אישי תיקון הבית לאדם נכה בדרגות גבוהות.
 6. לבדוק אפשרות צמצום הפערים בין סוגי הנכויות.
 7. למותן שירותי בריאות מתאימים לציבור הנכים ולדאוג במידת האפשר לסיוע בנושא התשלומים הנוגעים לתרופות לבעיות בריאות הנכים ולכלים ואביזרים לתפקוד הנכה.
 8. להתחשבות בבני האדם עם מוגבלויות בעת תכנון וחלוקת דיור, לרבות מתן פתרונות דיור בשכר דיור סוציאלי, סיוע בהתאמת דיור, להבטחת נגישות לנכים לכל בניין ציבורי ולהסרת מכשלות לשילוב האדם המוגבל במגורים בקהילה.
 9. לחפוש פתרונות נאותים להעסקת נכים לפי יכולתם.
 10. לקדם את ספורט הנכים בישראל ולהשתתפות בפעילות ספורט נכים בינלאומית. תשומת לב מיוחדת תינתן לנושא התקצוב של הכלים המיוחדים להם וזקוקים הנכים בענפי הספורט השונים.
 11. לבדוק האפשרות להקמת מרכזי ספורט ונופש לנכים, להקמת מועדונים לפעילות הנכים ולהקמת הוסטלים ומועונות לנכים.
 12. לבחון את האפשרות שגכים זכאים לניידות יקבלו פיצוי מלא בעד החלפת רכבם.

ערי הפיתוח והפריפריה

- מפלגת העבודה תעניק עדיפות לאומית ליישובי קו העימות, בפיתוח תשתיות בנייה וכבישים.
- על מנת לעודד הבאת תעשיינים ויוזמים ולעודד את התיירות, תיבחן האפשרות לתת מענק מיוחד במסגרת החוק לעידוד השקעות הון.
- משרדי הממשלה, יפעילו את התוכנית שנובשה יחד עם פורום ישובי קו העימות.
- הממשלה תבחן את הפעלת חוק אוזרי וערי הפיתוח, באזורי פיתוח א' בנחל ובנגב.

שכונות

■ הממשלה תפעל לטיפול השכונות בערים לשיפור איכות חייהם של תושבי השכונות על ידי הבטחת סל שירותים שכונתי העונה על צורכי החינוך, הבריאות, הרווחה, השיכון ותרבות הפנאי.

■ הממשלה תמשיך ותקצה משאבים לשיפור ולהרחבת דירות, שיפוץ חיצוני, שיפור רחובות, גנים ציבוריים, שיפור תוכניות שכונתיות וכל זאת תוך שיתוף התושבים בצוות ההיגוי, מתן השקעות מסיביות בפעילות חינוכית, חברתית וקהילתית להפחתת רמת התלות וחיווק החוסן והמרחב החברתי בשכונות.

■ הממשלה תפעל למתן עדיפות לזוגות צעירים חסרי דיור, תושבי שכונות שיקום ומצוקה על ידי מתן הלוואות ומענקים, תיבחן האפשרות להקל את מצוקתם של מקבלי משכנתאות על-ידי פריסת החובות או מתן סיוע אחר.

■ מתן עדיפות לבני שכונות זכאים לפרוייקט "בני דירתך" ודיור למשתכן.

■ הממשלה בראשות העבודה תגביר את פרוייקט השיקום החברתי, על מנת לתמוך בהקמת מרכזי למידה והעשרה נוספים בשכונות השיקום להעלאת רמת החינוך, הגדלת מספר התלמידים המסיימים עם תעודות בגרות והעלאת אחוז הסטודנטים בני השכונות.

■ הממשלה תעשה לעודד מורים ברמה גבוהה ללמד בשכונות.

■ הממשלה תפעל להרחבת מאגרי ספריית ההשאלה לסברי לימוד לתלמידים מעוטי יכולת.

■ יורחב פרוייקט הכשרה מקצועית לנוער מנותק ללא מסגרת ועולים חדשים חלשים בשכונות השיקום והמצוקה.

■ הממשלה תמשיך ותפעל לקידום השוויון בחינוך בכל הרמות ולהשלמת השכלה תיכונית והשכלה גבוהה בקרב האוכלוסיה הבוגרת בשכונות המצוקה, תוך בחינת מתן העדפה מתקנת לבנות ובני השכונות.

- הממשלה תבחן את סדר העדיפויות ואת האפשרות והצורך להנהיג באופן הדרגתי יום לימודים ארוך בשכונות השיקים והמצוקה בערים. יונהגו מפעלי הזנה (ארוחה אחת חמה ביום) במוסדות בהם יונהג יום לימודים ארוך.
- הממשלה שמה לה למטרה את מיגור נגע הסמים בארץ בכלל ובשכונות המצוקה בפרט. הממשלה תמשיך בתוכנית הסברה, מניעה, אכיפה, טיפול ושיקום. יושם דגש בתוכנית הסברה בקרב הצעירים תלמידי חטיבות הביניים והתיכון בבתי הספר ונוער ללא מסגרת.
- הממשלה תעשה למיתוח מרכזים עירוניים, בנייני ציבור, אולמות קונצרטים והופעות לבידור בשכונות הסובלות עד היום מחסרונם.

התיישבות וחקלאות

- החקלאות והכפר בישראל הם נדבך חשוב לאיוון המתאר הכלכלי, החברתי והאקולוגי של מדינת ישראל.
- צורות ההתיישבות השיתופיות, כפרית ועירונית, הם מרכיב בעל ערך סגולי לבנייתה וקיומה של חברה סולידרית ומשימתית בישראל.
- קיומם של כפר מודרני, חקלאות, התיישבות שתופית, מותנים במדיניות לאומית כוללת ותומכת.
- הממשלה תבחן איך להגן על זכות המתיישב על הקרקע.
- הממשלה תעשה למתרון המשבר הכלכלי של המושבים והקיבוצים.
- הממשלה תעשה לחיזוק ולפיתוח ההתיישבות באזורי הגבול ובישובי העימות ברמת הגולן ובבקעת הירדן.

היוצרים בישראל

חוק זכות יוצרים חדש

נציגיה של העבודה בכנסת ה-14 ידאגו לכך שיושלמו הליווי החקיקה של חוק זכות יוצרים חדש, שהוכן על-ידי ועדה שמונתה על-ידי שר המשפטים. חוק זה צריך לתת משקל ראשון במעלה ליוצר, אשר להגנתו, ולשמירה על זכויותיו, הוא אמור לתת תשובה נאותה. היוצר הוא זה שזקוק להגנה על קניינו הרוחני כדי לאפשר לו להמשיך ביצירה, שממנה נהנה הציבור כולו. כל זאת תוך הבטחת שליטתו של היוצר ביצירתו על כל אופני השימוש בה, וקבלת תמלוגים נאותים על השימושים האלה. אין משמעות לקיום הרוחני והתרבותי של מדינה ללא תרבות, ואין תרבות ללא יוצרים. רוחת היוצר וחיווק מעמדו הם צורך חיוני למדינה.

חוק רשות השידור

נציגיה של העבודה בכנסת ה-14 יבחנו את ביטולו של סעיף 38 בחוק רשות השידור משנת 1965. חוק זה, שעודנו בתוקף, מטקיע מידי היוצר את זכויותיו ביצירה שהוזמנה על-ידי רשות השידור.

העברת שידורים בכבלים

נציגיה של העבודה בכנסת ה-14 יבחנו את תיקון חוק העברת שידורים בכבלים ואת כרוח האמנה הבינלאומית, כדי שיבטיח לבעלי זכויות היוצרים תמורה הוגנת בגין העברת שידורים אלה. הכוללים יצירות מוגנות בהיקף נרחב ביותר. המצב כיום הוא שבעלי הזכויות של השידורים בכבלים מעבירים, על פי סעיף 6 כ"א לחוק הבזק, את שידורי הטלוויזיה והרדיו, המשודרים בחוק בישראל, ללא תשלום כלשהו לבעלי זכויות היוצרים, וממילא ללא צורך בהסכמתם.

מלחמה בפיראטיות

נציגיה של העבודה בכנסת ה-14 ידאגו לנקיטת צעדים נמרצים לביעור נגד הפיראטיות, הפוגע בצורה חמורה ביותר ביוצרים וביכולתם להתפרנס מעבודתם

מצע מפלגת העבודה לכנסת ה-14

ירתי, היקף הפיראטיות, היינו שימוש ביצירות מוגנות, בניגוד לחוק, בשידוריהן של תחנות רדיו פיראטיות, ובחפצה בריש גלי של קלטות ותקליטים מועתקים ומזויפים, היקף זה מגיע למימדים אדירים.

מס הכנסה ליוצרים

נציגי העבודה בכנסת ה-14 יפעלו לפתור את בעיות מס הכנסה של היוצרים בישראל. חברי העבודה בכנסת ה-14 יפעלו להגדיל באופן משמעותי את היקף ביצועי היצירה המקורית הישראלית בכל ערוצי הרדיו והטלוויזיה ובעיבוד יצירות ספרותיות ודרמטיות לרדיו, לטלוויזיה ולקולנוע. נציגי העבודה יפעלו להקל ככל האפשר על היוצרים בישראל בכל הקשור לתנאי עבודתם, מגוריהם ומחיייתם, וזאת בכל שפה ובכל תחום שיש בו יצירה מקורית.

The main points of Barak's plan "Yisrael Tovà Ioter" (Better Israel), 1998–The Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl- Israel



אני מאמין במדינת ישראל,
אני מאמין באזרחי מדינת ישראל.

אני מאמין במדינת ישראל ובאזרחי מדינת ישראל. הנהגה נכונה תוביל את מדינת ישראל להיות מדינה בטוחה יותר וצודקת יותר; מדינה הנהנית מפריחה כלכלית ומבטיחה לכל אזרחיה חינוך, בריאות ותעסוקה.

מדינת ישראל נתונה כיום בידי מנהיגות חלשה וחסרת אמינות. אנו זקוקים להנהגה אמיצה וחזקה שאפשר לסמוך עליה, מנהיגות שתצעיד את כולנו, יחד, לעתיד של שלום, בטחון ופריחה כלכלית.

אסור שקשיי הרגע יאפילו על ההישגים האדירים ויוצאי הדופן אותם השגנו בחמישים שנות המדינה. עלינו לזכור היכן היינו לפני יובל שנים: ישוב זעיר הקולט עליה מכל קצוות תבל, ואיוז כבדת דרך, חסרת תקדים בהיסטוריה האנושית, עשינו בזמן כה קצר. אני מלא תקווה ואמונה כי מדינת ישראל יכולה לעלות על דרך המלך, להגשים את יעדיה החברתיים, הכלכליים והמדיניים, ולתפוס את המקום הראוי לה בזירה הבינלאומית.

באופטימיות ובשיקול דעת, אני מציע לכם דרך שתאפשר לנו לשקם את נוקי השלטון הנוכחי ולבנות גשר שיציעדנו למאה העשרים ואחת: המאה השניה של הציונות והיובל השני של עצמאות ישראל.

על מנת להצליח במשימה זו עלינו לדעת לאן מועדות פנינו, להתוות דרך וקווי מתאר ברורים, ולהציב יעדים בני השגה. זו מטרת התוכנית שעיקריה מובאים לפניכם.

תוכנית ברק מתווה דרך לבניית ישראל חזקה מבית ומחוץ, ישראל שצועדת קדימה ושולטת בגורלה.

אני קורא לניסוח אמנה חברתית חדשה המציגה את ערכי השרות והתרומה

אני קורא לניסוח אמנה חברתית חדשה בין כל אזרחי ישראל: חילונים ודתיים, עולים וותיקים, מזרחיים ואשכנזים, ימין ושמאל, יהודים ושאינם יהודים. אמנה שתחליף את הסטטוס־קוו הישן בהסכמה חברתית חדשה המבוססת על פתיחות ורגישות חברתית, על תמיכה בחלשים ועל שותפות שווה בין שונים. אמנה המציגה את ערכי השרות והתרומה לחברה כערכי היסוד של החברה הישראלית.



עם פרוש שנת החמישים אנו מוצאים מדינה חדשה, שונה ומרתקת. עלינו לקיים עם כל אזרחי ישראל רב-שיח קשוב שעיקרו סובלנות, כבוד ופתיחות לצבעים, לצלילים, ולהוויה התרבותית והיחודית של כל קבוצה. רב-שיח שיוביל להסכמה חברתית חדשה, ולכניית מדינה יהודית ודמוקרטית בה יש מקום לבני כל העדות והדתות.

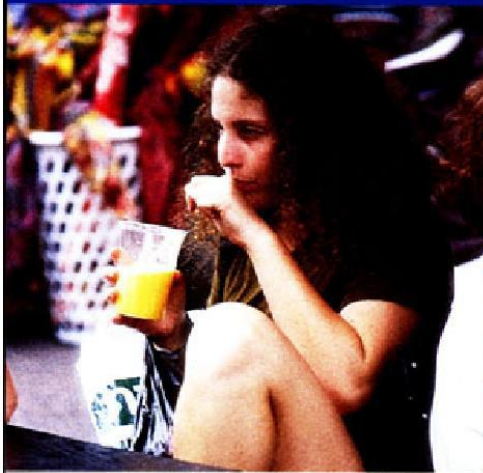
במדינה כמו שלנו, מדינה קטנה שאזרחיה מגויסים עליה תוך סיכון חייהם בלי הבדל הכנסה, מוצא או רקע, נדרשת רגישות אנושית וסולידריות חברתית. אני מאמין כי אנחנו יכולים לבנות מדינה המעמידה במרכז את האדם, את צרכיו ושאיפותיו ושומרת באדיקות על זכויות וחירויות הפרט. מדינה מודרנית המנוהלת באורח יעיל ומחליפה מערכת שלטון בירוקרטית וריכוזית במערכות אזוריות יעילות ונגישות לאזרח; מדינה המנהלת פוליטיקה אחראית, פתוחה והמונה.

אזרחי ישראל, אני מבקש את אמונתכם על מנת שיחד נוכל להצמיד את מדינת ישראל לעתיד טוב יותר.

אני מציע לכם מנהיגות חדשה המבוססת על שלושה עקרונות:
אחריות, אמינות ונאמנות

א.י.
אהוד ברק
יו"ר העבודה

לקהילה כערכי היסוד של החברה הישראלית.



תוכנית ברק - לישראל טובה יותר.

שלום וביטחון

אני מתחייב להמשיך את דרכו של יצחק רבין ז"ל. כמוהו אני מושיט יד אמיצה לאויביו מתוך אמונה שזוהי הדרך היחידה להשגת בטחון אמיתי ושגשוג כלכלי למדינת ישראל.

אלו עקרונותיה של תוכנית ברק בתחום השלום והביטחון:

נחדש את התהליך המדיני על בסיס הסכמי אוסלו

תהליך אוסלו הוא המסגרת היחידה להשגת מיוס היסטורי בין שני העמים. ביסודו רעיון השלבויות, ההדרגתיות וההדדיות. מקום בו לא יהיה תהליך מדיני לא יהיה ביטחון. במקום בו לא יהיה ביטחון, יהיה עול הביטחון גבוה ובסופו של דבר עלולה להתפתח התנגשות אלימה, שתגרוור את האזור כולו למערבולת של שמיכות דמים. אנו מאמינים שיש להמשיך ולקיים דיאלוג מדיני תוך הכרה בכך שתמיד תהיינה קבוצות קיצוניות שתנסנה, באמצעות טרור, לפגוע בתהליך ובאלו המובילים אותו.

נילחם מלחמת חורמה בטרור בכל מקום ובכל האמצעים

תוכנית ברק מציגה עמדה בלתי מתפשרת בנושא הטרור. עלינו להמשיך את מלחמת החורמה ביוזמי ומבצעי הטרור. אנו מאמינים שיש להלחם בטרור בכל הכוח, בכל מקום ובכל האמצעים.

נגן על שלמותה של ירושלים

ירושלים השלמה היא בירתה הניצחית של מדינת ישראל. לא נתפשר ולא נוותר על עקרון זה.

נבטיח גבולות בטוחים

לא נחזור, בשום מקרה, לגבולות 67'. לא נתפשר על בטחונה של מדינת ישראל ואזרחיה. כל הסדר אליו נגיע יהיה מותנה בשמירת גבולות בטוחים וביכולתנו להגן על המדינה ואזרחיה. בכל הסדר אליו נגיע ישארו רוב המתיישבים בגושי הישובים שבשטחים שבידינו.

35 שנים מחיי הייתי חייל והקדשתי לבטחון, שכלתי חברים ואיבדתי לוחמים. כלוחם וכמפקד בסיירת מטכ"ל, כמפקד בשריון, כראש אמ"ן, כאלוף פיקוד וכרמטכ"ל, תמיד ידעתי כי הכח המניע העיקרי שלנו הוא האמונה כי נוסתה כל דרך, מוצה כל מהלך ונמרץ כל מחסום כדי למנוע את המלחמה הבאה."

אהוד ברק, דברים שנשא ביום הזכרון.

נקדם את תהליך השלום תוך שמירה על
גבולות בטוחים. נילחם בטרור ללא פשרות.



תוכנית ברק - לישראל טובה יותר.

לא נסכים להקמתה של מדינה פלסטינאית באופן חד-צדדי לפני חתימת הסדר הקבע.

רק תהליך מדיני הנעשה תוך דיאלוג, הסכמה, כבוד הדדי ויחסי אמון בין המנהיגים, יוביל בסופו של דבר לשלום אמיתי, יחסי שכנות טובים, ואמון בין העמים. אי עמידה בהסכמים וחוסר אמון בין מנהיגים יביאו בסופו של דבר לאלימות ולשפיכות דמים.

מתוך האמונה שאסור למדינה יהודית לשלוט בעם אחר, תוכנית ברק מציעה לפעול **להימנעות מיזית** בין שני העמים תוך תאום הלחימה בטרור, ביסוס הקשרים הכלכליים וחזוקת קשרי האמון. רק הימנעות מעין זו תביא בטחון אישי לאזרחי המדינה ותשרת את האינטרסים המדיניים, הביטחוניים והמוסדיים של מדינת ישראל.

אנו מכירים ברשות הפלסטינאית ובראשיה כמנהיגי העם הפלסטינאי, ומאמינים שראשיה מבינים שלא ניתן לכפות עלינו פתרון בכוח ושרק בדרך של דיאלוג מדיני ניתן יהיה להגיע להסדר של קבע עם מדינת ישראל. מבחינת האינטרסים הישראלי, עדיפה הקמתה של קונפדרציה פלסטינאית-ישראלית. בהסכמה פלסטינית וירדנית, מדינה פלסטינאית, אינה ולא תהיה מטרה ישראלית. עם זאת, במידה שמדינה פלסטינאית תהיה תוצאה של הסכם הקבע, יש להקפיד שהמגבלות הבטחוניות והפוליטיות שיוסכם עליהן, תשקפנה את האינטרסים החיוניים של מדינת ישראל.

נחתור לקדם את המשא ומתן עם סוריה.

תוכנית ברק מציעה לחדש את המשא ומתן עם סוריה במטרה להגיע ל"שלום של אמיצים". שלום שלא יבצע בבטחון ישראל, על בסיס העקרון: עומק הנסיגה כעומק השלום, הנורמליזציה ואיכות סידורי ההתרעה והביטחון. רק כאשר נדע את עמדת הסורים בבעיות יסוד כמו בעלות על מקורות המים, מינור הטרור, פתרון בעיית לבנון, הבטחת סידורי הביטחון, הסדרי התרעה מוקדמת, קידום הנורמליזציה ושיתוף פעולה כלכלי וכל להגדיר את עומק הפשרה שאנו מוכנים לעשות בגילן.

ההסכם הכולל שיוטע יובא למשאל עם.

נפעל להוצאת צה"ל בשלבים מלבנון, כחלק מהסדר כולל.

אין לנו, ולא יהיו לנו דרישות טריטוריאליות מממשלת לבנון. יחד עם זאת, במצב הנוכחי, נוכחות צה"ל בלבנון חיונית להבטחת שלומם של ישובי הגליל. דרוש לנו הסכם שיבטיח קיומה של כתובת מדינית שתהיה אחראית למניעת טרור. כל עוד לא יהיה הסכם כזה, נמשיך לתת ייבוי לצה"ל לפעול בעוצמה כנגד כל מחזיק נשק בלבנון המסכן את חיילי צה"ל או את אזרחי מדינת ישראל.

תוכנית ברק ליציאה מלבנון בשלבים, על בסיס הסדר צבאי מדיני ישראלי-לבנוני בערבות סורית, שבמסגרתו יוכנסו לאזורים שצה"ל יפנה כוחות צבא לבנון וכוחות בינלאומיים, היא הדרך היחידה לפתרון הבעיה בלבנון מבלי להמר על בטחון יישובי הצפון.



**"יעדנו - פשרה היסטורית וקץ למלחמות.
לא לחיות לנצח על חרבנו."**

אהוד ברק, מפגש עם לוחמי חטיבת הצנחנים לדורותיהם.

נפעל להוצאת צה"ל בשלבים מלבנון,
כחלק מהסדר כולל עם הסורים.



חוכנית בדק - לישראל מובה יוחר.

נחזק את אבני היסוד נפעל להעמקת החינוך

חיזוק המשטר הדמוקרטי

לנוכח סימני השאלה וקריאות התגר האנטי-דמוקרטיות אליהן נחשפנו לחרדתנו בעת האחרונה, יש לחזק את אבני היסוד של המשטר הדמוקרטי ולבצר את תשתיתו הרעיונית, החינוכית והמעשית. דווקא בתקופה של מתחים וחילוקי דעות עמוקים מבית, חשוב שנתאחד ונקדש את שלטון החוק, עליונות החוק, השוויון בפני החוק, שמירה על זכויות היסוד וזכויות האזרח.

הקיסוב המעמיק בשורותינו מסכן את אחדות החברה. חובתנו לקיים דיאלוג נוקב עם כל שכבות הציבור. דיאלוג שאופיו ויעדיו מעוגנים במסורת של יואהבת לרעך כמוך", ומונעים על ידי השאיפה לשמור על אחדות העם והמדינה, ולהשיג שלום בית. ננהל דיאלוג זה תוך הקשבה ומתינות אך מבלי להתפשר על ערכי הדמוקרטיה ומרכזיותה בהווה הישראלית.

בישראל קיים היום משבר אמון במערכת הפוליטית. אנו נהל פוליטיקה שונה שתחזיר לציבור את הבטחון בכנותם של אנשי ציבור ובכנותם לפעול למען הכלל. נציג בפני הציבור את המדיניות שלנו, כולל החלטות קשות וכאובות, בגלוי, ללא כחל ושרק.

ננהיג יום בחודש שבו ראש הממשלה ושריו יענו לשאלות של הציבור.

נפעל להעמקת החינוך לדמוקרטיה בקרב כל שכבות הציבור. נפנה את המשאבים הדרושים לחינוך זה.

נבחן את חוק הבחירה הישירה של ראש הממשלה לאור הנסיון המצטבר ונפעל לחיזוק המערכת הדמוקרטית על ידי שכלול מנגנוני האיוון והבלימה, מעמד הכנסת וחיווק המפלגות.

מלחמה באלימות ופשיעה

במדינת ישראל הולכת ונוצרת נורמה של אי ציות לחוק. נאבק בתופעה זו, נדאג לאכוף את החוק ולהבטיח כי יוחל במידה שווה על כל האזרחים.

בשנים האחרונות הולכת הפשיעה וגוברת. באזורים מסוימים הופכות האלימות והפרת החוק את חיי התושבים לבלתי נסבלים. נקצה משאבים מוגברים למלחמה בתופעה מסוכנת זו. נפעל לחזק את המשטרה, להשביח ולהכשיר את כח האדם המגוייס לשירותיה.

לא נאפשר מצב בו אנשים חפים מפשע חיים במחד מתמיד וחשופים לאלימות הולכת וגוברת. זכותו של כל אדם לחיות את חייו בבטחון ובשלווה.

"אם למדנו משהו מרצח רבין ז"ל, הרי זה על הסכנות שבהסתה כנגד יריבים פוליטיים, ואי כיבוד הכרעות הרוב."

אהוד ברק, דברים שנשא בבית בליך, ר"ג.

של המשטר הדמוקרטי. לדמוקרטיה בקרב כל שכבות הציבור.



מדינה יהודית

מדינת ישראל היא מדינה יהודית, ביתם הלאומי של כל היהודים באשר הם. כמנשימיה של הציונות אנו רואים עצמנו כירשיה וממשיכיה של התרבות היהודית והתרבות העברית המפוארת. הווייתנו וזהותנו יונקות מהמורשת היהודית. נתיב אחד מולך משורשי מורשתנו הדתית והתרבותית לעתידה של מדינת ישראל.

אנו עוסקים היום בעיצובה של ישראל כמדינה ציונית, יהודית ודמוקרטית, מדינה המתבססת על שילוב ואיזון בין ערכי התרבות היהודית וערכים ליברלים-דמוקרטיים. מדינה המביאה לידי ביטוי את מחויבותנו לערכים הומניסטיים ולערכי הצדק החברתי המעוגנים במורשת היהודית.

הפתרון הראוי ליחסי דת ומדינה חייב להתעצב תוך כדי דיאלוג שיקיף את כל זרמי הציבור, דיאלוג שיוביל להסכמת המבוססת על חופש הדת וחירות הפרט.

באם אורחי ישראל היהודים לא יראו ביהדות את המורשת המשותפת להם ולא ירצו לשמר אותה, תחדל ישראל מלהיות מדינה יהודית. אי לכך רובצת על מערכת החינוך אחריות כבדה. עליה לאפשר לבני הדור הצעיר להכיר את היהדות ולהפנים את ערכיה, לימודי היהדות אמורים לאפשר לכל יהודי להכיר את עומק ורוחב התרבות היהודית לדורותיה, ולהעניק לו את היכולת לאמץ, מתוך מכלול רחב זה, את אותם היבטים המשמעותיים לחייו.

שימור הזהות היהודית וטיפוחה יסייע לשמירת הקשר עם יהדות התפוצות.

אנו עם אחד ועליו לשמור על אחדותנו ויחידותנו. נמנע להפחתת העוינות, להידברות בין הקבוצות השונות ולמצוא פתרונות הולמים לחוק ההפירה שיאפשרו לכל הזרמים ביהדות לחיות זה לצד זה בהבנה ובכבוד הדדי.

נחתור לבסס את מעמדה של ישראל כמדינה ציונית יהודית ודמוקרטית, המבוססת על ערכי הצדק, החירות ואהבת האדם.

"איננו יכולים לקיים כאן חברה יהודית בעלת שורשים וזיקה בלתי הפיכים לארץ-ישראל, ללא העוגן התרבותי-רוחני של מורשת ישראל."

אהוד ברק, דברים שנשא בהוג משוב.

אנו עם אחד. עלינו לשמור על אחדותנו וייחודנו
ולפעול להידברות בין כל הזרמים בעם.



כלכלה וחברה המדינה הסולידרית

הפערים הכלכליים ההולכים ומעמיקים, והתפשטות האבטלה, גורמים סבל רב למאות אלפי אזרחים ומאיימים על חוסנה ואחדותה של החברה הישראלית. ההוגחה החברתית-כלכלית של שכבות מסוימות הולידה מצוקה אנושית ופילוג בעם ועלולה להוליד את ישראל להתפוררות פנימית שתחליש את יכולתה להתמודד עם האתגרים הביטחוניים והחברתיים הניצבים בפניה. אני מאמין שעצמתה של מדינת ישראל מותנית בצמיחה כלכלית, בהבטחת תעסוקה, וחלוקה צודקת של משאבי המדינה.

צמיחה כלכלית, הבטחת תעסוקה, יצירת הזדמנויות עיסוקיות חדשות, ומשיכת השקעות בינלאומיות, לא תתאפשר באזור שאין בו יציבות ביטחונית-מדינית. אני מאמין כי אם לא יוכן שלום באזורנו עלולה ישראל להחמיץ את ההזדמנות לממש את הפוטנציאל הכלכלי הגלום בה.

המצע הכלכלי-חברתי המוצג כאן מונע על-ידי רגישות אנושית למצוקת הוולת וחתירה לצדק חברתי. ביסודו רעיון **המדינה הסולידרית** המטפחת את עקרונות השרות לאזרח והתרומה לחברה. המדינה הסולידרית מעודדת כלכלה חופשית המבוססת על בעלות פרטית, תחרות חופשית והתערבות מינימלית בשלב הייצור, אך פועלת להתאים את תוצאות פעילות זו ליעדים חברתיים של חלוקה רצויה של הכנסות ורכוש.

במדינה הסולידרית, מעורבות ממשלתית מוצדקת רק באותם תחומים בהם כלכלת השוק אינה מסוגלת להביא לתוצאות כלכליות וחברתיות רצויות. הבטחת בטחון, חינוך ובריאות, חלוקה הוגנת של הכנסה וצמצום פערים, ויצירת תשתיות פיזיות, בטווח הארוך, השקעה בתחומים אלו מעודדת צמיחה כלכלית ותורמת לשוויון הזדמנויות. התשואה הגבוהה ביותר מתקבלת מהשקעות בתחום החינוך, עקב תרומתו של תחום זה לפיתוח ההון האנושי. החינוך מהווה גם אמצעי יעיל לצמצום פערים בין מגזרי האוכלוסיה השונים ומאפשר ניצול מירבי של הפוטנציאל האנושי. תרומתה של ההשקעה בבריאות לצמיחה נובעת מהגדלת פעילות ויעילות כח העבודה. השקעה מתמשכת בתשתיות פיזיות (תחבורה, תקשורת וכו'), קריטית ליעילות המגזר העיסוקי היצרני. תשתית תעבורתית הולמת, מקרבת את הפריפריה למרכז ומקלה על הקשיים הרבים עמם מתמודדת הפריפריה, מאפשרת העסקה של תושבי הפריפריה במרכז, ומעודדת הקמת תעשייה בפריפריה.

על פי תכנית ברק, חלוקת משאבים ממלכתיים תעשה אך ורק על פי קריטריונים המבוססים על צרכי האזרחים ויעדי המדינה, ולא על פי מפתח סקטוריאלי וכניעה ללחצים פוליטיים.

מבנה המשק

נפעל להגדלת רמת התחרות במשק על ידי הנגלת המונופולים, הקטנת הריכוזיות ושחרור פעילות עסקית ממגבלות רגולטוריות, ויצאת הממשלה מבעלות על מערכות עיסוקיות שאין לממשלה יתרון יחסי בניהולן.

תעשייה

נפעל להרחבת בסיס תעשיית ההיי-טק ותעשיות מתקדמות אחרות על ידי תמיכה כספית מוגברת במחקר ופיתוח והקשרת אנשי תוכנה ומהנדסים בקצב מואץ. כמו כן, נעודד תעשייתיים להקים תשתיות בשווקים הבינלאומיים על ידי רכישת מפעלים ומערכי שיווק בחו"ל.

**נשנה את סדר העדיפויות לטובת הדברים
החשובים באמת - חינוך, בריאות ותשתיות.**



אנו חותרים לקיים חברה צודקת שיש בה משק חופשי והשקעות ממשלתיות נבונות

מסגרת התקציב

תפקידה של הממשלה לעצב תנאים לצמיחה כלכלית מתמשכת על ידי קביעת סדר עדיפויות מתאים, חתירה לצמצום פערים והקטנת רמת אי-הודאות במערכת המשקית. סדר העדיפויות במסגרת התקציב ישונה כך שעיקרו יוקצה לחינוך, בריאות ותשתיות, על חשבון אותם סעיפי תקציב המוקצים למגזרים פוליטיים שונים, מעורבות הממשלה צריכה להתרכז בתחומים אלו, ולאפשר לשוק החופשי לפעול ביעילות בכל שאר המגזרים. באמצעות מדיניות זו נביא לכך שעודל התקציב, כאחוז מהתוצר הלאומי, יקטן. זאת, מבלי לפגוע באיכות השרותים הניתנים לאזרח ומבלי להגדיל את הפערים החברתיים.

הקטנת הוצאות הממשלה תאפשר הקטנת נטל המס על המגזר הפרטי והעיסקי ותביא לצמיחה הדרגתית וקבועה, לאורך זמן. צמיחה זו תאפשר את צמצום הגרעון התקציבי ונידול ריאלי בהוצאות הממשלה ועל אף הקטנת חלקם של הוצאות אלו מסך התוצר הלאומי. שמירת מסגרת התקציב תוביל ליציבות, תאפשר הורדת הריבית, ובסיוע ליברליזציה מבוקרת במטבע ור תוביל לעידוד היצוא והקטנת היבוא.

שוק ההון

עידוד שוק ההון מהווה נדבך חשוב בתוכנית ברק. קרנות הפנסיה וקופות הגמל ישולבו בשוק ההון. מצד אחד זכויות המבוטחים יישמרו על ידי הטבות מס ואבטחת תשואה חלקית, ומצד שני יתומצו קרנות הפנסיה וקופות הגמל להשקיע בשוק ההון. מנגנון המיסוי יופעל כדי לעודד חסכון לטווח ארוך. חיסכון הנדרש למשק כאמצעי להוזלת משכנתאות ועידוד השקעות ריאליות.

מיסים

דושה רפורמה במבנה מערכת המיסוי. הקטנת שיעורי והרחבת בסיס המס. אין חולק על כך שהקטנת שיעור המס תהווה תמריץ לעבודה ולצמיחה. תוכנית ברק חותרת להקטין את נטל המס ותשלומי חובה על שכבות הביניים. שכבה זו מהווה את חוט השדרה של כוח העבודה בתעשייה, במסחר, בשרותים ובמגזר הציבורי.

העברת הדיור הציבורי לידי הדיירים

הדיור הציבורי הוא אחד מהמבשרים החשובים לצמצום ממדי העוני בישראל. בדיווח של חברות לדיור ציבורי מתגוררות כיום למעלה ממאה אלף משפחות. דיירים אלו תקלים בקשיים רבים בבואם למצות את זכויותיהם כדיירים ולהבטיח את זכויות הדיור של דייר ממושיך. על פי תוכנית ברק, דיירים המתגוררים לפחות חמש שנים בדיור ציבורי ושאינן בבעלותם דירה נוספת, יוכלו לרכוש את הדירות הציבוריות בהן הם מתגוררים במחיר מסובסד. זאת או תיתן גם לדייר ממושיך. העברת הדיור הציבורי לידי הדיירים הנוכחיים, תחייב יצירת פתרונות דיור לזכאים חדשים.

סיוע לזוגות צעירים לרכישת דירה

תוכנית ברק תציע שורה של תיקוני חקיקה שיקלו על זוגות צעירים ברכישת דירה ובחזר חובות הנובעים מלקיחת משכנתא. צעדים אלו יביאו לכך שרכישת דירה, תוך הסתייעות במשכנתא, תהיה בהישג ידו של כל אזרח בישראל.

העלאת רמת החיים הריאלית

רמת החיים הריאלית נקבעת לא רק על פי הכנסתו של האדם אלא גם על פי כוח הקניה שלו, והתועלת שניתן להפיק מהמוצרים הנוכשים. לכן, הוזלתם של מוצרים ושירותים והעלאת איכותם עומדת בעדיפות גבוהה לא מחות מהגדלת ההכנסה הנומיןלית. תוכנית ברק מציעה ליישם ולפתח את המערכות הממשלתיות והציבוריות המספקות לערך מידע ואת הבקרה על טיב המוצרים והשירותים שהוא מקבל בשוק הפרטי ובשוק הציבורי, ולעודד תחרות בין יצרנים, מוכרים וספקי שרותים לטובת הצרכן.

אחריות הדדית ורגישות אנושית.
יאפשרו לקבוצות רבות לצאת ממעגל המצוקה.



נגן על ילדים הגדלים בתנאי מצוקה ונחלץ נספק הכשרה מקצועית ונעודד

הפרטה

תוכנית ברק מציעה להפריט את כל החברות הממשלתיות וכן חלקים מסויימים של השירות הממשלתי. העברת מנקציות ממשלתיות וציבוריות ליזמות פרטית יכולה לשפר את תיפקודן של מערכות אלו ולשפר את השירותים הניתנים לאזרח. בכל תהליך של הפרטה יש לשמור על שני כללי יסוד: שמירה על מקום העבודה של עובדי התאגיד המופרט ורמת הכנסתם לתקופת זמן של 3-5 שנים. הכרה בעיקרון כי שוויון של המפעל נוצר מעבודת המעלים ולכן מגיע להם חלק מהתמורה המתקבלת מרכישת החברה אם באזרח ישייר ואם כמניות בחברה המופרסת.

תשתיות

השקעה בתשתיות תעבורתיות תצמצם את המרחק בין המרכז לנגב ולגליל, תפתח בפני תושבי אזורים אלו אפשרויות תעסוקתיות, השכלתיות ותרבותיות חדשות. תעודד מועסקים לעבוד באזורים אלו ותקדם פיתוח תעשיות ועסקים בנגב ובגליל.

מלחמה בעוני ובאבטלה

העוני והאבטלה הם מהנושאים הכאובים ביותר שהחברה הישראלית מתמודדת איתם. הפערים החברתיים במדינת ישראל הולכים ומתרחבים. יותר ויותר ילדים גדלים היום במציאות של עוני ומצוקה. יותר ויותר ילדים חוזרים היום לבית שבו ההורים אינם יכולים לממן את משפחתם. **תוכנית ברק שמה דגש על המלחמה בעוני ובאבטלה.** הערובה הטובה ביותר לצמצום האבטלה והעוני היא צמיחת המשק ויצירת מקומות עבודה חדשים. תוכנית ברק תפעל לקדם יעדים אלו באמצעים הכלכליים והפוליטיים שהוזכרו. גם צמיחה מהירה לא תוכל למנוע את סגירתן של תעשיות מסורתיות ופליטתם של אלפי עובדים. לאחר עשרות שנות עבודה יצרנית, לשוק שבו אינם מסוגלים למוט את דרכם. תוכנית ברק מציעה סיוע וליווי ממשלתי להסבה מקצועית ולתהליך מציאת תעסוקה חלופית. הממשלה תפעל בעניין זה, בשיתוף עם הסקטור הפרטי, ארגוני עובדים, השלטון המקומי וכן עמותות ונופים התנדבותיים, ליצור מקומות עבודה ועיסוק למובטלים.

תוכנית ברק תפעל לעידוד הצמיחה ולקידום התעסוקה על ידי הצעדים הבאים:

- משרבות ממשלתיות ליצירת מקומות עבודה בסקטור הפרטי ובסקטור השלישי (ארגונים התנדבותיים ומלכודים).
- הרחבת הודמנויות התעסוקה על ידי הקמת רשת רחבה של הכשרה מקצועית הכוללת שני מרכיבים: מתן הכשרה כללית למובטלים, סבסוד הכשרה תוך-מפעלית והסבה מקצועית.
- עידוד יזמות של עסקים קטנים, תוך שימת דגש על עסקים בבעלות נשים ועולים.
- מתן תמריצים למעסיקים שיקצו מקומות עבודה לחברי קבוצות המהוות מוקדי אבטלה, צעירים, עולים ונשים.
- מתן פטור מלא מס הכנסה ומביטוח לאומי לעובדים המשתכרים שכר מינימום.
- עידוד התעסוקה במשרות חלקיות במיוחד בקרב משפחות חד הוריות.
- ייעול חיפוש עבודה על ידי לשכות התעסוקה.
- עדכון מדיניות חלוקת דמי האבטלה תוך מתן דגש על הכנסת המשפחה ויכולת בני הזוג לצאת לעבודה.
- תמיכה בילדים ממשפחות המצויות מתחת לקו העוני, והבטחת יכולתם להנות משרות בריאות וחינוך הולמים.

"אני רואה את הכאב האנושי הצורב, את הבושה של הורים שאינם יכולים לממן לילדיהם השתתפות בטיול שנתי, את כאבם של לוחמים צעירים בגולני שעוזבים מאחוריהם את אביהם המובטל, ואת עומק החרדה מפני הפלגות הנורעת בעם והעדפת קבוצות לחץ."

אהרד ברק, כנס מפלגת העבודה באופקים.

אותם ממעגל העוני. נרחיב את מקורות התעסוקה,
מפעלים היוצרים מקומות עבודה במוקדי אבטלה.



נחיל את חוק חינוך חובה חינוס גם על גילאי 3-4, לאוניברסיטה, ונטפח מערכת חינוך המאפשרת

חינוך

החינוך הוא ציר וענף לתיקון והתחדשות החברה כולה. **תוכנית ברק שמה את החינוך בראש סדר העדיפויות הלאומי** ורואה בהשקעה בתשתית האנושית מנוף עיקרי לצמיחה כלכלית וחברתית. בטווח הארוך החינוך חשוב לא פחות מהביטחון, הוא מהווה מנוף לסגירת פערים בחברה, מכשיר לבניית התשתית הערכית, המחויבות לדמוקרטיה ואיכות החיים גם יחד.

תוכנית ברק מבטיחה חינוך חובה חינוס לגילאי 3-4, יום לימודים ארוך לכל ילדי ישראל, מלחמה בנשירה והעלאת מספר הזכאים לתעודות גמר, הרחבת מערכת ההשכלה הגבוהה והבטחת חינוך גבוה חופשי לכל דורש. אנו רוצים לפתח מערכת חינוך בה יש לבית הספר כמוסד, למנהל ולמורים, אוטונומיה נרחבת המאפשרת ומעודדת יוזמה, יצירתיות וחשיבה ביקורתית. אנו רוצים לראות מערכת חינוך מודרנית, פתוחה, קשובה לתלמיד ולהורה. מערכת חינוך המתמודדת עם השינוי ברכישת דפוסי הידע, עם טכנולוגיות מודרניות, וסביבות לימודיות חדשניות.

תוכנית ברק מתחייבת לפתח את החינוך בכל הרמות מהגיל הרך ועד לחינוך האוניברסיטאי. התוכנית תפעל למימוש היעדים הבאים:

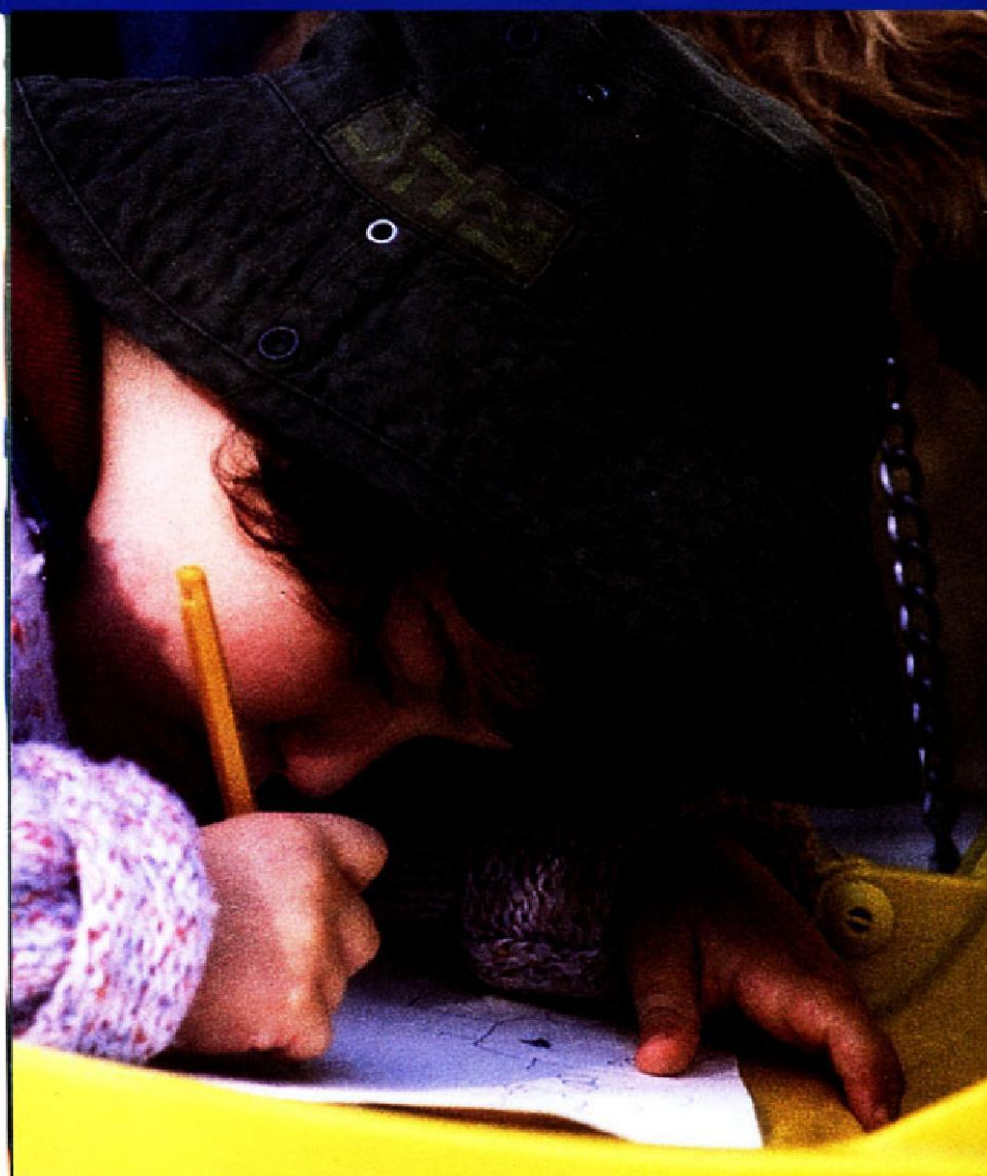
- צמצום פערים חברתיים על ידי מתן תמריצים לקידום מערכת החינוך בישובי עדימות-לאומית ובשכונות שיקום ורווחה, הקצאה דיפרנציאלית של תקציב החינוך והבטחת העברת מלא התקציב ליעדיו - לתלמיד ולבית הספר.
- הפעלת חינוך לגיל הרך במסגרת ממשלתית, תוך השוואת התנאים בין כל המסגרות החינוכיות לגיל זה.
- הפעלת יום חינוך ארוך שיביא לצמצום פערים חברתיים ויסייע להורים לילדים צעירים להשתלב בשוק העבודה.
- העלאת איכות הלימודים ע"י תמרוץ מורים המלמדים בשכונות ובעיירות הפיתוח.
- מאבק בנשירה מבית הספר ומיתוח מסלולי הזדמנות שניה.
- עידוד וסיוע לנוער לסיים תיכון ולהשיג תעודת גמר שתאפשר כניסה למערכת ההשכלה הגבוהה.
- הרחבת מערכת ההשכלה הגבוהה והקמת מערכת סיוע שתאפשר לכל המעוניין לרכוש השכלה גבוהה. תכנון מחדש של מערכת ההשכלה הגבוהה כך שתוכל לאפשר לכל בוגרי התואר הראשון המעוניינים בכך והעומדים בדרישות הקבלה, להמשיך ללמוד לתארים מתקדמים.
- מתן תמריצים ומענקים שיעודדו את משוחררי צה"ל ללמוד ולהישאר בארץ.
- מיתוח חינוך טכנולוגי שיעצב דור חדש של מדענים, חוקרים ומורים ויאפשר לישראל להשתלב בצמרת המחקר והתעשייה בתחומי המדע והטכנולוגיה.

החינוך יעמוד בראש סדר העדיפויות שלנו. אנו רואים בו כלי מרכזי לצמצום פערים, להבטחת שגשוג כלכלי ורווחה חברתית. ננהיג חינוך חובה חינוס לגילאי 3-4, יום לימודים ארוך לכל ילדי ישראל, נלחם בנשירה ונעלה את מספר הבוגרים בעלי תעודות גמר, נאפשר לכל המעוניין לרכוש השכלה גבוהה ונפתח את החינוך המדעי המתקדם שימקם את ישראל בחזית הטכנולוגית של עולם המחר.

"אין בחברתנו נושא שיש נכונות רבה יותר של דור המבוגרים להקריב למענו, מאשר עתידו של הנוער."

אהוד ברק, ביקור בבניס דנמרק, שכונת קטמון, ירושלים.

ננהיג יום לימודים ארוך וכניסה חופשית
ומעודדת יוזמה, יצירתיות וחשיבה ביקורתית.



נספק לכל אזרח, ללא קשר לגיל או רמת נאפשר לכל אזרח להזדקן בכבוד

בריאות

משרת הבריאות במדינת ישראל מתמודדת עם אתגרים קשים. הרפואה השחורה בעליה והמגעים החברתיים יוצרים חוסר שיוויון ביכולת הגישה של אזרחים לשירותי בריאות איכותיים.

שיוויון והגישות חברתית הן אבני היסוד של תוכנית ברק. אנו מאמינים שהמדינה הסולידרית מחויבת לאפשר לכל אזרחיה שרותי בריאות מתקדמים ללא קשר להכנסתם וגילם. על פי תוכנית ברק, יושם דגש מיוחד על אספקת שירותי בריאות הולמים לגימלאים, הראויים לטיפול ותמיכה בזכות ולא בחסד.

● הסבה של משרד הבריאות מגוף המספק במישרין שירותי בריאות, למשרד המתווה מדיניות, מכון ומפקח, דואג לקיום סטנדרטים נאותים בכל המערכת, מונע ביובז וכפילות, ומפעיל בקרה כללית. במדיניות המשרד ייעדפו הרפואה הראשונית והמונעת על פני הרפואה האישמוזית. יתן דגש מיוחד לפיתוח רפואה מונעת בקרב נשים.

● תאום בין מוסדות האישמוז ובין השירותים האמבולטוריים, וקביעת רציפות בטיפול בחולה, תוך הדגשת חשיבות רפואת המשפחה. דבר זה יוביל לאחריות כוללת ומתואמת של שני חלקי המערכת על הטיפול בחולה בין אם הוא נעשה בבית החולים או בקהילה - ויחסוך בין היתר הוצאות מיותרות הכרוכות בכדיקות חוזרות ובלתי מצודקות הנעשות בשתי הרשויות הרפואיות: האמבולטורית והאישמוזית.

● הסדרת האישמוז הסייעודי והביטוח. התקנת מתקנים נוספים של אשמוז סייעודי, תקטין חלק ניכר מהעומס המוטל על בתי החולים הכלליים, המאשמים כיום, בעלות יקרה, קשישים סייעדיים במחלקות מימיות. אנו מחויבים להבטיח לכל אזרחי המדינה את האפשרות להזדקן בכבוד מבלי ליפול לנטל על אחרים.

"אני מסתכל בהוריי, שאני אוהב מאוד, וחושב לעצמי שכל אדם במדינת ישראל חייב להיות משוכנע שבימי זקנתו יוכל להיות חיים של כבוד."

אהוד ברק, במנש עם גימלאים.

הכנסה, שירותי בריאות נאותים.
מבלי ליפול לנטל על אחרים.



המשך העליה וקליטתה

עליה וחברה

מראשית ימי הציונות תרמה העליה לבנייה וחיווקה של מדינת ישראל.
תוכנית ברק רואה בהמשך העליה מפתח לצמיחתה העתידית של מדינת ישראל. התוכנית שמה
בעדיפות עליונה את עידוד העליה ודאגה לשילוב עולים במוקדי הכוח וההשפעה של החברה הישראלית.

קליטתם המוצלחת של מאות אלפי עולים היא הישג אנושי, חברתי וכלכלי אדיר. עם זאת עליו להכיר
בכך שהעליה חייבה את העולים להתנתק מקרקע צמיחתם ולאבד את ייחודם התרבותי. חבלי הקליטה
וקשיי ההשתלבות, נמנו בכבודם ובדימויים העצמי של רבים מהעולים וגרמו לתחושות ניכור מהגופים
הקולטים, תחושות שהותירו צלקות עמוקות. העדר שיוויון הזדמנויות העמיק את תחושת הקיפוח
וההפליה, ויצר קרע בין רבים מן העולים לבין הגופים שעסקו במלאכת הקליטה המורכבת, בראשם
מפלגת העבודה. עליו לאחות קרע זה.

**בקשת הסליחה שביקשתי מבני עדות המזרח היא צעד ראשון בכיוון זה. אני קורא לציבור הישראלי
להכיר בכאבם ובקשיי קליטתם של העולים ממדינות ערב, ולפעול לצמצום הפערים הכלכליים
והחברתיים, שמקורם בשנות הקליטה הקשות.**

עליו ללמוד מנסיון העבר, למתוח בדו-שיח כן עם העולים מהעליות השונות על אופי החברה הישראלית,
ולעצב מדיניות קליטה חדשה שתאפשר לעולים מברית המועצות, רוסיה וחבר המדינות ולעולי אתיופיה,
שעדיין מתמודדים עם הקשיים הכרוכים בהשתלבות בחברה חדשה, למצוא כאן את ביתם מבלי לאבד
את זהותם וכבודם.

- נפעל לסייע לעולים לשמור על תרבותם, לשונם ומנהגיהם למענם ולמענו, שכן כולנו נהנים מהעושר
התרבותי שהעליה מביאה.
- נלחם באפליה ובהתנשאות כלפי העולים. נאבק למען סובלנות ומתיחות תרבותית להווייה היחודית
של העולים ללא פטרונות או אדוות.
- נפעל למציאת פתרונות דיור הולמים לעולים.
- נפעל לסייע לעולים חדשים למצוא תעסוקה הולמת, ובמידת הצורך נסייע בהכשרה והסבה מקצועיים.
- נפעל לסייע לילדי עולים להקלט במערכת החינוך, ונלחם בנשירה של ילדי עולים ממערכת החינוך.
- נפעל לשילוב עולים בהובלת המפלגה והמדינה.
- במסגרת הפתרונות הכלליים נדגיש את חשיבות הסיוע לוותיקי מלחמת העולם השנייה, לעולים קשישים
ולאמהות חד-הוריות.

**"בלי עליה, מדינת ישראל לא היתה קמה, ובלי עליה היא לא היתה יכולה להתפתח
ולהפוך למה שהיא היום: מדינה מודרנית, מתועשת, בעלת איכות בלתי רגילה."**

אהוד ברק, פגישה עם עולים מרוסיה בנצרת עילית.

המוצלחת היא מפתח
לצמיחתה ועוצמתה של מדינת ישראל.



תוכנית ברק - לישראל טובה יותר.

ניישם את תוכנית 'הזדמנויות 2000' שתבטיח ייצוג נאות לנשים בתחום

מעמד האישה

תוכנית ברק מתחייבת להוביל את המאבק לקידום מעמד האישה בחברה הישראלית. בבסיס התוכנית שומדות שתי הנחות יסוד: האחת, שוויון זכויות והזדמנויות מתחייב מאופיה של ישראל כחברה דמוקרטית. השנייה, מבחינה חברתית, היכולת הנשית היא משאב בלתי מנוצל. אי ניצולו של משאב זה פוגע בחברה כולה ומפחית את יכולתה להתמודד עם היעדים החברתיים והכלכליים הניצבים בפניה.

ציבור הנשים הוא ציבור חזק ומשכיל ועליו להשתלב בצמרת העשייה החברתית, הכלכלית והפוליטית. תוכנית ברק נועדה לסייע לנשים להשיג יעד זה, ולתפוס את המעמד החברתי-כלכלי-פוליטי הראוי להן. **צעד ראשון בכיוון זה היה אישור ועידת המפלגה את תוכנית ברק להבטחת ייצוג לנשים מ-25% בכנסת הבאה ועד ל-40% בשנת 2010.**

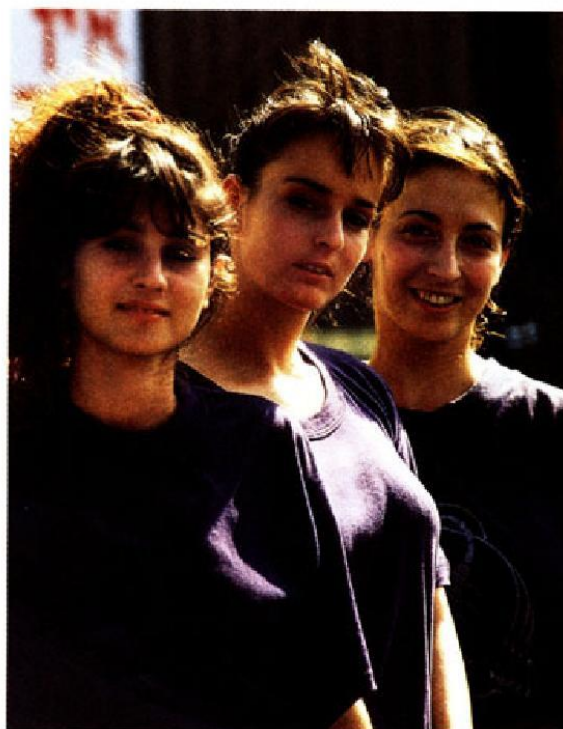
על מנת לקדם את מעמד האישה, נקדם את תוכנית "הזדמנויות 2000" שעיקריה:

- הקמת רשות שתעקוב אחר יישום חוק שחר שווה, חוק שוויון הזדמנויות בתעסוקה וחוק שחר מינימום ותאכוף אותם.
- בחינת השכר והקידום של נשים בשרות הציבורי, ואימוץ תוכנית של אפליה מתקנת לצמצום הפערים הקיימים.
- אימוץ החלטת ממשלה האוסרת חתימת חוזים עם גופים כלכליים המפלים עובדים על יסוד מין, גזע, או לאום.
- שינויים מבניים במשק שיאפשרו להורים לילדים צעירים להמשיך בעבודתם: שעות עבודה גמישות, יום לימודים ארוך, מעונות יום לגיל הרך, תמיכה והדרכה להורים עובדים, במסגרת טיפת חלב.
- הכרה בהוצאות הכרוכות בטיפול בילדים, כאשר שני בני הזוג עובדים, דבר שיגביר את הכדאיות של יציאת הורים לילדים צעירים לעבודה.
- הקמת רשות למאבק באליומות נגד נשים. רשות זו תתאם את פעילויות הרשויות השונות, תפעל להרחיב ולממן את רשת המעונות לנשים מוכות ואת תוכניות הגמילה לגברים מכים, תפתח תוכניות לטיפול בנשים מוכות במסגרת המשפחה ותעקוב אחר אכיפת מכלול החוקים שנועדו להלחם באליומות כנגד נשים.

"מראשית דרכי הפוליטית הבטחתי לקדם את מעמד הנשים; הבטחתי ועשיתי. בהנהגתי עשתה מפלגת העבודה צעד ניכר בכיוון זה והבטיחה ייצוג לנשים בכל מוסדות המפלגה וברשימותיה. זהו רק צעד ראשון בהבטחת שוויון מלא לנשים."

אהוד ברק, נאום בכנסת ביום האשה הבינלאומי.

הפוליטי, הכלכלי והחברתי.



נשווה את התקציבים המופנים לבני קבוצות המיעוט. נשפר

שיוויון זכויות ומעמד המיעוטים

ניסיונו ההיסטורי של עם ישראל מחייב להבטיח את זכויות המיעוטים לחיים בכבוד, לאפשר להם לשמור על ייחודם התרבותי-דתי ולהבטיח שיוויון אמת ברוח ערכי מנילת העצמאות. אזרחי ישראל הערבים הם אזרחים נאמנים מהווים שותפים מלאים לצמיחתה ופריחתה של מדינת ישראל. חובה על מדינת ישראל לשמור על זכויותיהם ולהעניק להם משאבים הדומים לאלו שהיא מעניקה לאזרחיה היהודים. החיים המשותפים של ערבים ויהודים יהיו טובים הרבה יותר כאשר ייכון באיזורנו שלום. אני רואה את עצמי מחוייב לתהליך השלום. שלום שיאפשר למדינת ישראל למצוא את מקומה במזרח התיכון, ולפתח יחסי שכנות טובה עם כל עמי האזור.

תוכנית ברק רואה בביטול האפליה נגד חברי קבוצות המיעוט יעד מרכזי.

● נאבק למען שוויון מלא לאזרחי ישראל הערבים, הבדואים, הדרוזים ושאר בני המיעוטים. שיוויון בחינוך, בתעסוקה, בדיוור ובתשתיות.

● נשווה את התקציבים המופנים לבני קבוצות המיעוט.

● נפעל לשיפור מערכת החינוך במגזר הערבי. בשיתוף עם ראשי הציבור הערבי, נבחן דרכים לשפר מערכת זו, להשוות את רמתה לזו של מערכת החינוך היהודית.

● נפעל למען יצירת תשתית כלכלית וחברתית בישובי המיעוטים, השווה באיכותה לזו המצוייה ביישובים יהודיים.

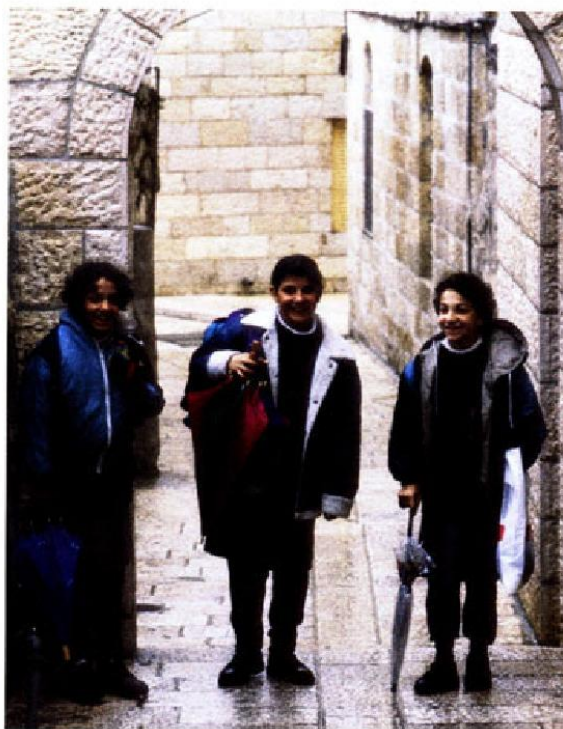
● נפעל לשלב בני מיעוטים בשירות הציבורי, בכל הרמות כולל ברמות הגבוהות ביותר.

במגילת העצמאות התחייבה ישראל לשוויון זכויות לכל אזרחיה, ללא הבדל דת, גזע, לאום או מין. נפעל למימוש שוויון זה, לסגירת פערים ולביטול כל סוג של קיפוח.

"מאז קמה מדינת ישראל גילו אזרחיה הערבים נאמנות למדינה. אני יודע להעריך נאמנות זו שהשתמרה למרות כל הקשיים."

אהוד ברק, דברים שנשא בפגישה בשפרעם.

את מערכת החינוך במגזר הערבי.



גיוס תלמידי ישיבות לצה"ל ולשירות אזרחי

גם בעידן של שלום, לא נוכל לוותר על צבא חזק. מדינת ישראל חשה מחויבות מיוחדת לחיילי צה"ל הנושאים בעול ההגנה על בטחון המדינה ומסכנים את חייהם למענה.

חלוקה בלתי צודקת של הנטל הביטחוני והאזרחי מעצימה את המתחים החברתיים ומחדדת את אי השוויון בין אזרחי ישראל. העובדה שמספר הולך וגדל של חרדים מקבל פטור משירות בצה"ל ונאלץ להיות סמוך על שולחן הישיבות לצורך פרנסתו, הפכת ציבור זה לציבור הניזון מהמדינה אך אינו תורם תרומה משמעותית לכלכלתה או לביטחונה.

מצב העניינים הנוכחי, בו הציבור החרדי פטור מנשיאת נטל ביטחוני, הוא מצב בלתי צודק ובלתי הוגן. הצעת שינוי לחוק שרות בטחון, על פיו יבוטל הפטור הניתן לבני הישיבות, הם יגויסו לצה"ל וישולבו ביחידותיו. פטור יינתן רק למספר מצומצם של עילויים שימשיכו בלימודיהם על חשבון הציבור. על פי תוכנית ברק, צה"ל יעניק בתיאום עם גורמים רבניים, פטור למספר מצומצם של תלמידי ישיבה מחוננים להמשיך בלימודי יהדות, ולמספר מצומצם של תלמידים מחוננים, להמשיך בלימודים כלליים ולהתמחות בתחומי הצטיינותם. כל האחרים, יופנו למערכת שתפנה את המתגייסים לשירות צבאי ולשירות אזרחי. במסגרת השירות הצבאי והאזרחי, יוענק לכל המגויסים חינוך למחויבות אזרחית ולהכרת ערכי הדמוקרטיה, מוסדות השילטון, עקרונות שילטון החוק, זכויות האזרח וחובותיו.

התוכנית תחייב הקמת רשות מיוחדת לשירות אזרחי, שתרכז נתונים על בני טוהר בגיל גיוס, תתכן ותפקח על פעילות השירות, תפקח ותנהיג אחראית על התיאום עם משרדי הממשלה השונים: חינוך, בריאות, רווחה ומשטרה, ותהווה את חוליית הקשר עם הארגונים הכלכליים השונים במשק. יתרונותיה של תוכנית זו מרובים:

- אפשרות לתת את הטוהר החרדי לשירות צבאי ואזרחי תורם למדינה, לחברה ולקהילה בה הם חיים, שירות העשוי להניב תועלת חברתית בטווח המידי ותועלת כלכלית בטווח הבינוני והארוך.
- קידום השיוויון בחלוקת הנטל החברתי והחובות האזרחיות בין הציבור החילוני, הדתי והחרדי.
- צמצום המתחים החברתיים שאי השוויון הנוכחי מחדד.
- מתן אפשרות לבוגרי השירות האזרחי להשתלב במגזר התעסוקתי ובכך להעלות את רמת חייהם ולהפחית את הנטל המוטל על מוסדות הרווחה ואוצר המדינה.
- שילוב של אלפי צעירים בנקודות תורפה משקיות וכלכליות יתרום לאיכות החיים והשיוויון הציבוריים במדינת ישראל.

גיוס החרדים לצה"ל הוא צו השעה. מצב בו הציבור החרדי פטור משירות צבאי, אך מקבל הטבות ניכרות מקופת המדינה, הוא בלתי צודק ויש לשנותו.

"כמי שעוקב מקרוב אחר שדותם הצבאי של נערים ונערות מכל רחבי המדינה, וכמי שמקד על חיילים דתיים, אני משוכנע שאין סתירה בין להיות איש דתי לבין הרצון והיכולת לתרום להגנת המדינה. יש לגייס את הנוער החרדי לצה"ל. חמישים שנה של חלוקה בלתי שווה של הנטל, חייבות לבוא לסיומן."

אהוד ברק, מתוך מפגש עם נוער בערב גיוס, בנבעת התחמושת.

ניישם את חוק ברק לגיוס תלמידי הישיבות
מתוך האמונה ברעיון: עם אחד - גיוס אחד.



נקים מערכת תחבורה ציבורית זמינה, יעילה ונשפר את תשתית הכבישים. נחמיר

המלחמה בתאונות הדרכים

מאות אנשים נהרגים מדי שנה ואלפים נותרים נכים לכל חייהם כתוצאה מתאונות דרכים. תאונות הדרכים מהוות את אחד ממגזרי הקטל המרכזיים והנוראיים בישראל. בנוסף למחיר בחיי אדם אנו משלמים מחיר כלכלי גבוה בגלל אובדן ימי עבודה, הוצאות בריאות, וקצבאות נכים. תוכנית ברק תצא למלחמת חורמה נגד תאונות הדרכים.

- נפעל לשיפור תשתית הכבישים.
- נפעל להפעלת מערכת תחבורה ציבורית זמינה, יעילה וזולה שתקטין את העומס בכבישים.
- נפעל להעלאת הרמה המקצועית ושיפור תנאי עבודתם של נהגי הרכב הציבורי והרכב הכבד על ידי השתלמות במימון מעסיקים, צמצום שעות הנהיגה, והחלת האחריות לתאונות גם על חברות ההובלה.
- נפעל להגמשת שעות התחלת וסיום העבודה והלימודים, באופן שיסייע לצמצום נפח התחבורה בשעות העומס.
- נגדיל את התמיכה ברשויות האוכפות את החוק.
- נחמיר את העונשים על ביצוע עבירות חוזרות, ונטיל קנסות כבדים מאוד על עברייני תנועה.
- נאבק בתאונות הדרכים, על הקטל והסבל האנושי שהן מביאות. על כולנו מוטלת האחריות למנוע את הלולזל בחיי אדם, שהפך לנגע במקומותינו.

"כשאני רואה את הסבל הנגרם למשפחות שיקריהם נפגעו בתאונות דרכים, את היתומים והאלמנות, אני מזדהה עם כאבם ומרגיש מחוייב להלחם בנגע תאונות הדרכים בכל האמצעים שבידי."

אהוד ברק, דברים שנשא בנאום בכנסת.

וזולה את העונשים על עבירות תנועה חוזרות.



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נשמור על השטחים הירוקים. נגביל את אישורי הבניה באיזורים

איכות הסביבה

שמירה על איכות הסביבה היא צורך אנושי ולאומי ממדרגה ראשונה. יש לנו ארץ מופלאה, שיש לה מאפיינים טבעיים מיוחדים במינם. במשך חמישים השנים הראשונות של המדינה, בנינו ערים משגשגות וחקלאות למופת, אך דחינו את הטיפול באיכות הסביבה. הבעיות הסביבתיות אינן יכולות לחכות עוד: הנחלים מזוהמים ומהווים סכנה ציבורית - אנו חייבים לקות אותם; מאגרי מי התהום מנוצלים מעל לקיבולתם - אנו חייבים להגן עליהם; כבישי הארץ פקוקים וסתומים - אנו חייבים למתח אלטרנטיבות תעבורתיות הולמות.

תכנית ברק מתחייבת לשקוד על מציאת פתרונות הולמים לבעיות אלו, פתרונות המונחים על ידי דאגה לא רק להווה אלא גם לחיי ילדינו ונכדינו.

- משבר הפסולת המוצקה דורש טיפול. לא די במציאת אתרי פסולת חלופיים. יש לנהל את זרימת הפסולת, לעודד תעשיות מיחזור ושימושים חלופיים, ולהפחית את הזרימה למזבלות.
- נפעל לתכנון תשתית תעבורתית המבטיחה ניהול וניידות לכל האוכלוסייה, מבלי לסכן את בריאות הציבור עקב עליה בזהירות אויר. נשמור על השטחים הירוקים ונגביל את אישורי-הבניה באזורים שיוגדרו כחיוניים לאיכות הסביבה.

- נגן על חושי הארץ מפיתוח מופרז ונבטיח לציבור יכולת ניהול חופשית לחופי הים התיכון, ים המלח, הכנרת ומפרץ אילת.

- נפעל לשקם את אגני הנחלים ולהפכם ממאגרי ביוב לריאות ירוקות של נופש ובילוי.
- נגדיל את התמיכה ברשויות לשמירת הטבע. נחמיר את העונשים על אלו הגורמים לזיהום סביבתי, ולהכחדת הטבע והנוף.

- נפעל להגן על בריאות ובטיחות העובדים במדינה מסכנות סביבתיות במקומות עבודה.
- בעיות סביבה אינן מכירות גבולות מוליטיים. אנו מתחייבים למעול למען שיתוף פעולה עם שכנינו במזהית, לצורך תכנון וביצוע פרויקטים לשמירת מי תהום ומקורות מים, ועל מנת לקדם טיפול משולב בפסולת מוצקה ורעילה.

נשמור על איכות הטבע והסביבה, שהיא גם איכות חיינו היום ובעתיד.



"אני מסתכל בארץ הזאת ובנופיה. אני אוהב לטייל בה וללכת בשביליה. עלינו לעשות כל מאמץ לשמור על יופיה המיוחד של ארצנו."

אהוד ברק, דברים שנשא במפגש עם פעילים למען איכות הסביבה.

שיוגדרו כחיוניים לאיכות הסביבה.



תוכנית ברק - לישראל טובה יותר.

אני יודע באיזו דרך ברצוני להוביל את המדינה. בדרך זו אצטר, יחד איתכם, בביטחה ובנחישות. מיד עם בחירתי לתפקיד ראש הממשלה, אני מתחייב להתחיל ולפעול בנושאים הבאים:

שלום ובטחון

נפעל להעניק לאזרחי ישראל ביטחון מירבי המבוסס על צבא חזק ושלום אמת עם שכנינו. נשמור על ירושלים מאוחדת לנצח. לא נסכים לעולם לחזור לקווי 67.



משטר דמוקרטי

נחזק את השילטון הדמוקרטי. נבזר את מוסדות השילטון ונאפשר לאזרחים להכיר ולהשפיע על מדיניות הממשלה.



מלחמה באלימות

נדאג לאכוף את החוק ולהבטיח כי יוחל במידה שווה על כל האזרחים. נקצה משאבים מוגברים למלחמה בפשע. נפעל לחיזוק המשטרה, להשבחה ולהכשרת כח האדם המצויים לשירותיה.

מדינה יהודית

נחתור לבסס את מעמדה של ישראל כמדינה יהודית, ציונית ודמוקרטית המבוססת על ערכי הצדק, החרות ואהבת האדם.



כלכלה וחברה המדינה הסולידרית

נפעל לקיים חברה סולידרית וצודקת, המאופיינת על ידי אחריות הדדית ורגישות אנושית. משיק חופשי והשקעות ממשלתיות נבונות בתשתיות אנושיות ומיזמות בתחומי החינוך, הבריאות והתעסוקה, יאיצו את הצמיחה וייצרו תנאים ליציאת קבוצות רבות ממועגל המצוקה והעוני.



חינוך

החינוך יעמוד בראש סדר העדיפויות שלנו. אנו רואים בו כלי מרכזי לצמצום פערים, להבטחת שגשוג כלכלי ורווחה חברתית, נבטיח חינוך ברמה הגבוהה ביותר לכל ילדי ישראל, נאפשר לכל המעוניין לרכוש השכלה גבוהה ונפתח חינוך מדעי מתקדם שימקם את ישראל בחזית הטכנולוגית של עולם המחר.



בריאות

נבטיח לכל אזרח, ללא הבדל גיל או מצב כלכלי, שרותי בריאות הולמים. נאפשר לכל אזרח להודקן בכבוד.



עליה וחברה

תוכנית ברק רואה בהמשך העליה מפתח לצמיחתה ועצמתה העתידית של מדינת ישראל. התוכנית שמה בעדיפות עליונה את עידוד העליה ודאגה לשילוב עולים במוקדי הכוח וההשפעה של החברה הישראלית.



יחד נבנה ישראל טובה יותר, ישראל שהיא מקור גאווה ותקווה לנו ולילדינו.

מעמד האישה

נפעל לקדם שוויון זכויות לנשים. ניישם את תוכנית "הודמנויות 2020" שתבטיח ייצוג נאות לנשים בתחום הפוליטי, הכלכלי והחברתי.



זכויות המיעוטים

במגילת העצמאות התחייבה ישראל לשוויון זכויות של כל אזרחיה, ללא הבדל דת, גזע, לאום או מין. נפעל למימוש שוויון זה, לסגירת פערים ולביטול כל סוג של קיפוח.



גיוס חרדים לצה"ל ולשירות אזרחי

גיוס החרדים לצה"ל הוא צו-השעה. מצב בו הציבור החרדי מטור משרות צבאי, אך מקבל הטבות ניכרות מקופת המדינה הוא בלתי צודק ויש לפעול לשנותו. נפעל ליישום חלוקה שווה של הנטל בין כל אזרחי המדינה: "עם אחד - גיוס אחד".



תאונות הדרכים

נאבק בתאונות הדרכים, בקטל ובסבל האנושי שהן מביאות. על כולנו מוטלת האחריות למנוע את הוילדול בחיי אדם שפשה במקומותינו.



איכות הסביבה

נשמור על איכות הטבע והסביבה, שהיא גם איכות חיינו היום ובעתיד. נפעל לפתור את משבר הפסולת, להגן על איכות המים והאוויר, ולשמור על ארץ ישראל יפה.



יחד נבנה חברה המקדשת את כבוד האדם וחירות הפרט. חברה המטפחת רגישות אנושית וחתירה לצדק חברתי.

**לישראל מגיעה מנהיגות אחרת,
מנהיגות ישרה, אמיצה ואמינה, השמה
במרכז את הדאגה לכל אחד ואחת מכם.
זאת המנהיגות שאני מציע לכם.**



אהוד ברק נולד ב-1942 בקיבוץ משמר השרון. הוא נשוי לנאוה ואב למיכל, יעל וענת.

ברק התגייס לצבא ב-1959 ושרת כחייל, כקצין וכמפקד סיירת מטכ"ל. במסגרת שירותו פיקד והשתתף ברבים מהמבצעים - חלקם עדיין חסויים. המפורסמים שבהם - חילוץ המטוס החטוף של סבנה וההתקפה על מפקדות המחבלים בביירות, שבמהלכה חוסלו ראשי הטרור.

במהלך שירותו בצה"ל, סיים ברק תואר ראשון בפיסיקה ומתמטיקה באוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים (1968) ותואר שני בתחום ניתוח מערכות באוניברסיטת סטנפורד שבקליפורניה (1978).

במלחמת ששת הימים ב-1967, שימש ברק כמפקד צוות סיור. במלחמת יום כיפור ב-1973, פיקד על גדוד טנקים בחזית הדרומית בסיני. במלחמת שלום הגליל ב-1982, שימש סגן מפקד הכוח העל-אוגדתי שפעל בבקעת הלבנון.

בגיל 37 הועלה ברק לדרגת תת-אלוף. בינואר 1982 הועלה לדרגת אלוף ושירת כראש אגף התכנון, ראש אגף המודיעין ואלוף פיקוד מרכז. במאי 1987 מונה לסגן הרמטכ"ל. באפריל 1991 הועלה אהוד ברק לדרגת רב-אלוף ומונה לרמטכ"ל.

במשך הקריירה הצבאית, קיבל ברק את עיטור "המופת" ו-4 צל"שים נוספים על אומץ לב והצטיינות בקרב. אהוד ברק הוא בעל מספר הצלישים הגבוה ביותר בצה"ל.

ממאי 1994, מועד חתימת הסכם עזה-יריחו, עסק רב-אלוף ברק ביישום ההסדרים הבטחוניים של ההסכם ובפיקוח על הפריסה מחדש של הצבא בעזה וביריחו. בתקופה זו היה לו תפקיד מרכזי בשיחות עם הסורים והוא נפגש מספר פעמים עם הרמטכ"ל הסורי ח'יכמת שיהבי.

לאהוד ברק היה תפקיד מרכזי בניבוח הסופי של הסכם השלום עם ירדן ב-1994. זמן רב לפני חתימת ההסכם, נפגש ברק עם המלך חוסיין ועם עמיתיו הירדנים ובין השניים נוצרו יחסי אמון חמים.

כקצין בכיר, ולאחר מכן כרמטכ"ל, היה אהוד ברק במשך 14 שנה שותף קבוע בישיבות הממשלה ועבד בצורה הדוקה עם 4 ראשי ממשלה: בנין, פרס, שמיר ורבין.

ביוני 1995 קרא יצחק רבין לברק להצטרף לממשלתו כשר הפנים.

לאחר רצח רבין ז"ל, מונה ברק לשר החוץ בממשלתו של שמעון פרס. לאחר בחירות 1996 נבחר ברק לכנסת והוא חבר בוועדת חוץ ובטחון.

ביוני 1997 נבחר אהוד ברק ליו"ר נופלנת העבודה ומועמדה לראשות הממשלה.



ANNEX II: ELECTIONS POSTERS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

1977 Elections



I- "Truth. Economy and society. Peace and security".

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From the platform of the Ma'arach – Israeli Labor Party, Collected selection propaganda for the Knesset. 1948 - Series 9 (V 3007): Elections to the Ninth Knesset – 1977, The National Library Of Israel, V 3503, file n.2:Mifleget HaMa'arach.



2 - "Jewish State. I believe in the covenant: I gave to your seed this Land"



3 - "Safra and Sayfa. I will vote for Mafdal. I believe in Israel's eternity"

*

Mafdal – National Religious Party, Collected selection propaganda for the Knesset. 1948 - Series 9 (V 3007): Elections to the Ninth Knesset – 1977, The National Library of Israel, V 3503, file n.4: Miflegat HaMafdal.



4 - "Dash, led by Yigael Yadin"

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Dash, Collected selection propaganda for the *Knesset*. 1948 - Series 9 (V 3007): Elections to the Ninth *Knesset* – 1977, The National Library Of Israel, V 3503, file n.3: *Mifleget Dash*.



5 - "Disaster prevention council – As long as we survive the *Likud*"



6 - "Menachem Begin, Likud's candidate for Prime Minister!"

7 - "The Arafat State Won't Arise!"

*

Collected selection propaganda for the Knesset. 1948 - Series 9 (V 3007): Elections to the Ninth Knesset - 1977, The National Library Of Israel, V 3503, file n.1: Mifleget HaLikud.

1992 Elections



8 - "The decision is yours"



9 - "Labor headed by Rabin"



10 - "We all are cleaning the country"



11 - "We are security. Labor Party"



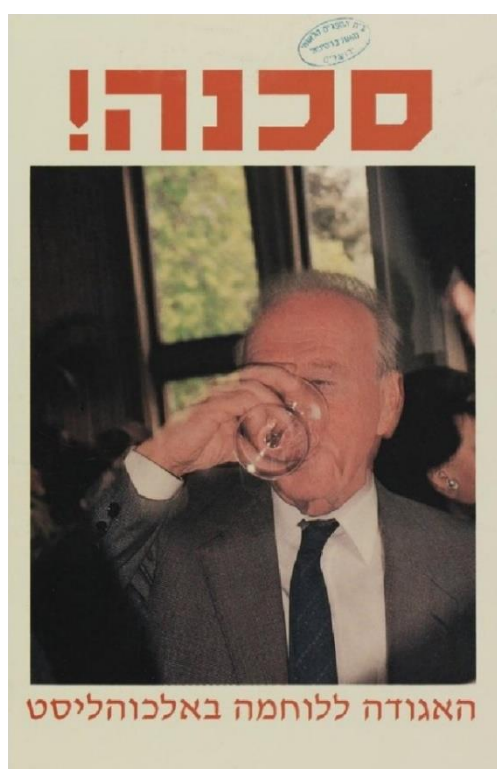
12 - "Let's choose the prime minister. Rabin"

*

Collected selection propaganda for the *Knesset*. 1948 - Series 13 (V 2885): Elections to the Thirteenth *Knesset* - 1992, The National Library Of Israel, V 3503, file n.1: *Mifletet Ha'Avoda*.



13 - "Today you chose which identity card will have for the country"



14 - "Danger! Organization Alcoholics Anonymous"



15 - "The Left is a danger for the unity of Jerusalem"

*

Collected selection propaganda for the *Knesset*. 1948 - Series 13 (V 2885): Elections to the Thirteenth Knesset - 1992, The National Library Of Israel, V 3503, file n.3: *Miflet HaLikud*

After so many pages, I would like to dedicate these last ones to the people who, during these years have always supported me unconditionally and made possible the conclusion of this path. You are the names and the faces which helped me to become the person I am today, which helped me to walk.

First of all, I would like to thank prof. Riccardo Redaelli, my tutor, my mentor, but most of all, the person who has believed in me for all these years (almost none) and who had the tenacious patience to support me and to welcome me, even in the moments when was so evident that I am anything but perfect. Thank you for having guided me during this path.

Paolo Maggiolini, who was there in the moment of need and who has never refused to begin with me endless and formidable conversations about the places and the histories we developed a passion for.

Andrea Plebani and Anna Lisa Pinchetti, for have always welcomed me in the team, not only professionally, but most of all for the person who I am.

Prof. Arturo Marzano and Prof. Marcella Simoni, who accepted to dedicate their time to give me precious advices to improve my work. I would like to thank Prof. Marzano also for the dedication he addressed to my curiosity during these last months.

Prof. Simha Epstein for having introduced me to the world of Israel's political history and to have helped me to set the basis for this research.

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Last but not least, Prof. David Mendelsson: he is the first professor I met in Israel, he is the one who made me develop my passion for Israel and its reality. Thank you for this incredible gift.

My full gratitude goes to my family, my big incredible family. We are a very, very numerous tribe, so I am not going to list you all guys... but just be aware of the fact that when I say "family" I am hugging all of you, each one of you. Matteo, (my brother) I would like to name you only because you are my "little pesky rock".

And then my friends: family too. Thank you because you are my home, the place I can return to. Even if there are just names here, behind them there is something priceless: they correspond to faces, to shoulders that have shared with me this adventure.

Thanks to my life-time girlfriends Cate, Cipp e Ila;
to my Civil Service companions (for life again) Ali, Anto e Ceci;
to my "D. di Domodossola": Anto, Beosky, Chiara, Edo e Jack;
to my "coinqui": Benniboo e Giuli;
to Dome and Fior (it is hard to find adjectives of any sort);
to my Graziella, Antonella e Don Lele;

to my Jerusalem KGB girls (you know what I mean): Benny, Ili e Oui Oui;
to my Rocchins;
to my Paul and Chicca;
to my “haverim”: Fab, Luca and Misch;
to my “sorella” Valeria;
to my “Yitzhak Rabin Center companion” Michael;
to my Jerusalem friends: Desi, Ettore, Juanes, Laura and Santiago;
to my “SciPol Unicatt” mates Fede and Pive;
and, finally, to my splendid Ph.D. Girls’ squad: Daria, Ele, Ire and Sara.

These pages are dedicated to each of you. To each of you, my immense gratitude. Toda Raba.